Crimes Against India

And the Need to Protect its Ancient Vedic Tradition

1000 Years of Attacks Against Hinduism and What to do About It

Stephen Knapp

Crimes Against India

And The Need to Protect its Ancient Vedic Tradition

1000 Years of Attacks Against Hinduism
And What to do About it

By
Stephen Knapp

Dedicated to all those, great or small, who have worked and sacrificed to protect and preserve the Vedic Dharma, as well as all those who are still doing so, for without whom we would not have the freedom and facilities to observe these traditions today.

Copyright © 2009 by Stephen Knapp

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher, except for brief quotations.

This is a Vedic Friends Association project: www.vedicfriends.org.

ISBN: 978-1-44011-158-7 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-4401-1159-4 (ebk)

Other books by the author:

The Secret Teachings of the Vedas
The Universal Path to Enlightenment
The Vedic Prophecies: A New Look into the Future
How the Universe was Created and Our Purpose in It
Toward World Peace: Seeing the Unity Between Us All
Facing Death: Welcoming the Afterlife
Proof of Vedic Culture's Global Existence
The Key to Real Happiness
Destined for Infinity
Reincarnation and Karma: How They Really Affect Us
The Heart of Hinduism: The Eastern Path to Freedom, Empowerment and Illumination
Vedic Culture: The Difference It Can Make In Your Life
Power of the Dharma: An Introduction to Hinduism and Vedic Culture
The Eleventh Commandment: A New Code for Social Spiritual Development
Seeing Spiritual India: A Guide to Temples, Holy Sites, Festivals, and Traditions
Yoga and Meditation: Their Real Purpose and How to Get Started
Avatars, Gods and Goddesses of Vedic Culture

Find out more about Stephen Knapp, his articles, books and projects, and much additional information at his website:
www.Stephen-Knapp.com

Contents

PART ONE
THE WAR AGAINST INDIA'S ANCIENT TRADITIONS

Chapter One: 3
The Purpose of This Book and Defending Dharma

Chapter Two: 9
The War Against Hinduism

Chapter Three: 18
Vedic Culture: The Last Bastion of Deep Spiritual Truth
The Prison of Religion * The Freedom in Vedic Culture

PART TWO
INDIA'S HISTORY AND ITS BATTLES TO PROTECT ITS CULTURE

Chapter Four 29
Early Invasions and the Weaknesses of India
The First Attacks of Islam * The Main Failure and Weakness of India * Do Not Miss the Message of the Past

Chapter Five 38
The Real Intentions of Islamic Invaders

Chapter Six 43
Historical Episodes in India's History that Should Not be Forgotten
The Attacks of Mahmoud Ghazni * Mahmoud Ghazni's Attack on Mathura * The Destruction of Somnath * Muhammad Ghuri * The Slave (Mamluk) Sultans * The Khaljis * Warning Signs of Tyranny * The Sacking of Chidambaram and Sri Rangam * The Tughlaqs * The Plunder of Jagannatha Puri * Invasion of Kathmandu * Muzaffar Shah's Attack on Somnath * Amir Timur * The Sayyids * The Lodis * Sikandar Lodi's Treatment of Mathura * Dwaraka Destroyed by Muhammad Begrha * The Mughals * The Destruction of the Govindaji Temple in

Vrindavana * The Destruction of the Keshava Temple in Mathura * The Muslims Burn Lord Jagannatha at Puri * The Bahamanis * Shivaji and the Marathas * How to Win

Chapter Seven 81
The Portuguese and the Goan Inquistion

Chapter Eight 92
The Real Intention of the British in India
The Missionaries * Keeping Indians in Poverty * Demeaning the Vedic literature * The Real Good that Came From British India * Interest in Ancient Indian Traditions in Europe * How European Interest in Hinduism Came Back to India Through Gandhi * Historical Incidents of the British in India * The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 * The "Divide and Rule" Policy of the British * On the Road to Independence * The Plague * The Slaughter at Jallianwala Bagh * The Final Struggles for a Free India—in Summary * Jinnah and the Muslim Attitude for Partition

Chapter Nine 128
The Salt Tax: The Cause of Much Suffering and Many Deaths
The Need for Salt * Death and Dying Under the British

PART THREE
THE STRUGGLES THAT GO ON TODAY

Chapter Ten 141
Insidious Ideas
Belittling the Vedic Literature * The Aryan Invasion Theory * Was There Ever an Aryan Invasion? * TheTerms "Aryan" and "Dravidian" * The Proto-Indo-European Language * The Caste System

Chapter Eleven 155
Casteism: Is It the Scourge of Hinduism, or the Perversion of a Legitimate Vedic System?
What Casteism is Today * What is the Original Vedic System Called Varnashrama * The Earliest Reference to the Varnas * How the Present Casteism Developed * The Dangers of Casteism as we Find it Today * What we can do to Eliminate the Caste System

Chapter Twelve 175
Condescending Attitudes of India's Elite

Chapter Thirteen 180
Cultural Preservation in India's Northeast
Why Bother with the Northeast? * Traveling in Arunachal Pradesh * The People of Arunachal * The Dangers in the Northeast * Working to Restore Cultural Balance * My Lectures * Preventing Loss of Culture in Nagaland * Christian Conversion Tactics in Other Parts of India * Denigration of the Vedic Tradition

Chapter Fourteen 206
The Threat Against Hindu Temples and Vedic Culture by India's Government
Protecting Vedic Temples

Chapter Fifteen 215
Some of the Present Threats and Challenges
Hindus Need to Be and Do More * Lack of Unity * The Waning of Vedic/Hindu Society * Unequal World Press * Terrorism and the Loss of Hindus Around India * Ridiculous Foreign Policy * India's Politicians * Bureaucratic Corruption * The Legal System * The Threat of Pakistan * Kashmir * Muslim Tactics in Other Areas * China in Tibet * Social Problems * Cleanliness of India * Saving the Girl Child * Dowry * Child Labor * Bonded Labor * The Homeless * Malnutrition * Literacy * Overpopulation

PART FOUR
WHAT WE CAN DO NOW

Chapter Sixteen 259
Hindus Must Stand Strong for Dharma
What is Vedic Culture

Chapter Seventeen 264
Sanatana-Dharma: It's Real Meaning

Chapter Eighteen 269
About the Name "Hindu"

Chapter Nineteen 277
Save Your Culture
Solutions

Chapter Twenty 283
Vedic Culture: As Relevant Today as Ever

Chapter Twenty-one 289
Giving Vedic Culture to the Next Generation
Monitoring and Reviewing Children's School Books

Chapter Twenty-two 297
Creating a Spiritual Revolution in India for Protecting the Vedic Heritage
Focusing on the Villages * Ways of Reaching Out to the Villages Doing Padayatras by Swamis and Acharyas * Organizing and Teaching Villagers * Building Little Temples in Each Village * Establishing an Open-Door Policy of Sharing Culture and Traditions * Villages and Conversion * Providing Spiritual Education and Practice * Book Distribution * Retraining for Temple Priests in the Villages * Providing Assistance for Medical Concerns * Providing Free Food Distribution for Children * Rallies to Protest Government's Biased Actions * Follow-Up Actions and Organizing Villages

Chapter Twenty-three 316
Vedic Temples: Making Them More Effective
It's all in the Presentation * Using the Universal Language * Temple Classes * Educating the Youth * Mentoring Programs * Training Temple Members in Service * Temple Ashramas * Temples Must be Well Kept * Festivals & Programs for the Local Community * Welcoming Non-Hindus into the Vedic Fold * Book Distribution * Cultural Presentations * Outreach Programs * Temple Tours and Cultural Exhibits for Local Students * Temple Exhibits * Temple Gift Shops * Spiritual Libraries * Temple Restaurants * Support Groups * Pilgrimages to the Holy Places of India * Promotion * Temples Must Share Methods that Work * Temple Must Help Unify People

Chapter Twenty-four 339
A Call to be Vedic Ambassadors
Being a Vedic Ambassador

Contents vii

Conclusion 343

Glossary 346

References 351

Index 353

About the Author 361

PART ONE

THE WAR AGAINST INDIA'S ANCIENT TRADITIONS

CHAPTER ONE

The Purpose of This Book and Defending Dharma

The first thing that needs to be established is that this book is not produced to bring out old hatreds, or to invoke new anger toward old incidents. What has happened in the past is a matter of history, and we intend to discuss the real history of India to see how far the country and its culture has come, the many challenges it has endured, and how the greatness of India and its culture has remained, in spite of how much it has been attacked through the years. But the culture and people of India (Bharata Varsha) remain only after many courageous episodes, sacrifices, trials and tribulations of the common residents of the land. But such determination to never give up their culture and traditions makes them highly uncommon and commendable. It is also due to the credit of the heroes who fought and died for the privilege and freedom we have today that allows us to practice and take advantage of the Vedic culture that still exists.

Why should we review the history and development of India over the past 1000 years? To help show how fortunate we are and how important and relevant Vedic culture has been and still is to humanity at large. Plus, to show that only through our concerted efforts will there be the continuation of the Vedic traditions, Sanatana-dharma, or Hinduism as many people call it today. Thus, we should not take this lightly, but reflect on and learn the significance of India's ancient traditions, and also participate in upholding them. That is what Dharma means, the natural laws that maintain all else, and Dharma is our duty to act in a way to help maintain Dharma. There are two parts to Dharma: the state of Dharma and the path of Dharma. The state of Dharma, or Sanatana-dharma, is our eternal Dharma, or our natural state of being as an eternal spiritual entity. Whereas the path of Dharma means the appropriate thoughts, words, actions, and attitude in the varying situations of life that help us enter into that state of Dharma.

There is now a growing interest in various aspects of Vedic culture in the West. For example, there has been a revival of the ancient medical system of Ayurveda, not only within India but also in the West, which is one of the greatest medical systems ever devised. This system is free from the allopathic medicines that often have harmful side effects and force the user to be dependent on drugs that merely make the huge foreign companies wealthy. The yogic sciences, such as pranayama, hatha-yoga, meditation, etc., that have been practiced for the development of body, mind and soul for thousands of years are also found nowhere else but in this great Vedic culture. Kerala's kalaripayat system of martial arts is the great ancestor of the Asian techniques of karate, judo and others. This is because it was taken to the orient by Buddhist monks who had become familiar with it and then developed their own systems. The kalaripayat martial arts brought many instruments together, such as swords, knives, spears, flexible two-sided swords, etc., into a single system. Though these arts and practices are still used and alive in the ashramas across India, and in the homes of numerous people, they are not recognized by the government, nor promoted in a way wherein the people in general can be proud of what India and its ancient rishis have provided. Furthermore, the "secular" government of India even demeans many of these Vedic sciences and practices as ancient myths or remnants of the old ways as if they should be given up or left behind. Nonetheless, if children were trained in such things as hatha-yoga, pranayama, meditation, and Ayurveda, they would grow to be some of the healthiest and strongest individuals on the planet. And those that are trained in such a way are often just that, extremely intelligent, healthy, and strong individuals. This is what needs to be preserved.

Therefore, this book is to honor the efforts that have been shown by those in the past who fought and worked to protect India and its culture, and to help preserve India as the homeland of a living and dynamic Vedic tradition of Sanatana-dharma (the eternal path of duty and wisdom). Yet, there are many people who do not know of the many angles and ways in which this profound culture is being attacked and threatened. There is much to do to protect this culture, and until we are aware of how it has been assaulted in the past, and how it is threatened in the present, we will not have the motivation to take a stand and defend it.

What is the true heritage of India, the basis for its existence? It is the law of Dharma, Sanatana-dharma. This is the foundation that has preserved the rights of humanity and the spiritual development of its people. This is the essential greatness of India. And this is also what its

children from an early age should learn and understand about the great heritage of India. They should learn to honor and respect the Vedic literature, from the *Vedas* to the *Mahabharata*, *Upanishads*, *Ramayana*, and up to the *Puranas*. They should know that when the West was still in its developing stages, the land of India, Bharata Varsha, was already unsurpassed in what it would contribute to the world. And this is why India should never cut itself off from its profound past. It is what has built India into the great nation that it is.

Especially, India's wonderful and immense Vedic spiritual knowledge is what has provided the deepest insights into the real identity and purpose of humanity. No other culture has provided such knowledge and realizations about who and what we really are. It has provided the profound keys to the mysteries of life, such as why we are here, where we have come from, what happens after death, what is the soul, what is the spiritual dimension, what is God, and so on. India has kept this truth, in spite of all the invasions and disruptions in her civilization, and the genocides and attempts to cause the complete demise of Sanatana-dharma. The spiritual knowledge and developmental processes remain. But we must make sure that it stays with us, which it can only do if it is held sacred in the heart of every Indian, and every person who values what India and her great rishis of ancient times have given to us. In the darkest of eras that this world has seen and will see in the future, this will remain India's gift to the people who inhabit this planet. It is this spiritual culture of Sanatana-dharma that remains the ultimate spiritual guide of humanity with the freedom to investigate it in whatever way is best for each individual. This is the reason why India is here, and for the contribution that she makes, and the reason why we must work to protect it.

The fact remains that through the Vedic spiritual knowledge, there is more information about God and the many forms of God, the qualities and characteristics of God, the nature of the soul and our relationship with God, the spiritual dimension, and the purpose of this world than you can find most anywhere else. The Vedic culture does not have just one book upon which it depends, but has a library of Vedic literature, extending from the four *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Vedanta-sutras*, *Bhagavad-gita*, and through the *Puranas*, and more. Only those who fully study the contents of these texts, or even the essence of them compared to other religious books, can understand and support this point of how much more the Vedic culture and wisdom has to offer.

Therefore, everyone should engage in a preliminary study of such texts to find out the value of what they have given to the human

race. If humanity had learned the true depth of knowledge held within the Vedic scripture, there would have been a decidedly different atmosphere and direction in society. Instead, India and the great sages have held onto this knowledge and presented it for everyone's benefit, but there needs to be more than that. We can see that many have misunderstood this knowledge, or allowed themselves to become distanced from truly comprehending and utilizing this sacred and fathomless wisdom. For example, I have traveled all over India and I will say that most of India's social problems are not because of its culture, but because of the forgetfulness and distancing itself from this culture and knowledge. At the core of the Vedic spiritual information, as found in its Vedic texts and insights provided by the rishis, is the true guideline for the development of the planet and the direction and spiritual destiny of all human beings. Fortunately, this is still available and waiting for the attention of people everywhere, if they will only dive deeply enough into it to perceive it.

For this reason, defending the Vedic culture is part of our Dharma, part of our duty and religious principles for the future benefit of India and humanity at large. Or, you could say that defending Dharma is our Dharma.

India is facing numerous threats from such directions as Pakistan and China on the political front, but also from within by those who would prefer to see the demise of India's culture for their own agenda, be it political, religious, or otherwise, which we will point out more carefully as we go through this book. For this reason, India must keep its options open and learn to rely on its own resources, being as self-sufficient as possible, regardless of what the rest of the world may think. India is certainly one of the oldest and most profound civilizations on earth, and there is no reason why it should not be proud of its past, its great history, its development, and its potential for a bright and positive future. But India and all Indians must be ready to stand up and protect their country and its culture from all external and internal threats with great determination.

However, to do this there may be a need to use strong measures against extreme situations. We are all for establishing peace in the world, for that is a state of Dharma, but some violence may be necessary to preserve Dharma from violent forces, to bring about peace, as we have seen from the past. This does not mean we use violence that is based on ego, or a political agenda, or for revenge. But it is for the defense and protection of Dharma. This was the reason for the Kurukshetra War, which lead to the speaking of the *Bhagavad-gita* by Lord Krishna to His

friend and warrior Arjuna. In this way, Arjuna understood that the purpose of acting as a warrior was to preserve the moral and religious principles as held and presented in Sanatana-dharma. But part of that included the destruction of the *asuric* or demoniac elements that were determined to ruin society by neglecting or even demolishing and annihilating the great spiritual lifestyle as found in Sanatana-dharma, the great Vedic culture.

This need can be seen as recently as during the establishment of independent India in 1947. Passive resistance or constitutional agitation was never enough to achieve an independent India. Firm actions or even some violence is also occasionally necessary, but only when it flows from the cause to defend, preserve, and protect the Dharmic and Vedic or spiritual path of life. And today's Dharma is to safeguard it and keep it free from all demoniac forces who would wish to see it destroyed, or who wish to control the population for their own irreligious or *adharmic* agenda. This is also the real liberation of India, which is not only a theory, but a practical application for directing it on the path to its higher destiny. And that destiny and purpose is to remain the homeland of a dynamic and thriving Vedic culture. To do this will take more than mere physical strength, but the strength of higher knowledge, deep inner and spiritual realizations, and a collective cooperation amongst all Hindus and followers of Vedic culture. We must work together as fellow practitioners of Vedic Dharma. We must view ourselves as equal members of a Global Vedic or Dharmic Community, a worldwide Hindu family. I have often said, if the global Hindu society could ever become truly united, there would be no force strong enough to conquer it from outside. It is only the divisiveness or lack of cooperation from within that creates the weaknesses that make it vulnerable.

However, over the long term, a cultural revolution is better than a military or militant revolution. Or, as they say, the pen is mightier than the sword. This means that the Vedic spiritual knowledge is what can help people understand, maintain, and be convinced of the importance of the Dharmic culture. This is actually what has kept the Indian people dedicated to the Vedic traditions for so long, in spite of how they had been persecuted by so many invaders. Working together in this way to promote the Vedic universal spiritual truths is what can bind people to the cause of preserving the culture of Sanatana-dharma, as long as we also allow everyone to participate. This is how people develop the determination and sincerity to follow it and uphold its standards. This is how people remain resilient to keep it in their hearts no matter what else may happen.

This resilience of Vedic society has already been shown by its ability in passing the tests of time. It is one of the oldest living indigenous cultures in the world, and certainly the largest, and has withstood numerous attacks and invasions, especially through the past 1000 years. But why the area of India was ultimately conquered for a time was because of its weaknesses, which were due to a lack of unity amongst the kingdoms to work together, which we will also more fully explain in later chapters. It was this lack of cooperation that allowed the *adharmic* forces to come in and create havoc for the millions of people in India.

In this way, we must not repeat the same mistakes as in the past. We will never be able to completely analyze the immense physical and emotional harm done by the long history of Islamic invasions and attacks, and the enormous amount of destruction of Vedic temples and the slaughter of Hindus. We also can not properly estimate the damage done to the spiritual culture of India and its people. So many sacrifices had to be made merely because of the Muslim invaders who so wanted to demolish the culture of India and all representations of it. Or of the British who wanted to possess and control it. The damage and harm that was done still exist in many ways, such as the more than 90% of converted Muslims in India whose families were once Hindus. Or in the form of Pakistan which has been an enemy to India ever since its creation. Or in the form of trouble found in Ayodhya and Kashmir where the militants cry for an Islam separate from what was once their motherland of India. We cannot allow for the reappearance of these same mistakes that permitted these things to happen. We must be stronger than that if we are to keep India as the homeland of a dynamic and thriving Vedic tradition. We must be pro-active, cooperate, and work together, and must recognize ourselves as members of the Global Vedic Community working to protect our freedom to practice Vedic Dharma.

CHAPTER TWO

The War Against Hinduism

Over the years we have all heard about the many attempts that have been made in India to convert various sections of society from Hinduism to either Christianity or Islam. But only after one of my trips to India did I really get a much clearer understanding of what has been going on. Furthermore, most people, as well as many Indians, are not fully aware of how the war against Hinduism is happening, nor how serious it is. It is taking place on many levels, and because of this, in some areas the practice of Hinduism is declining rapidly.

When I was traveling in June of 2001, I had gone on a lecture tour, speaking every night at places like Mumbai, Nagpur, Warangal, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Hyderbad, Bangalore, Trivandrum, and Chennai. So I had the chance to meet with many of the intellectuals and some of the spiritual leaders in these areas, and learned how conversion was a very hot issue.

Now I do not have anything in particular against Christianity itself. I was born and raised a Christian, so I know what it is, but also how they work. My main contention is when the teachings that are said to come from Jesus are twisted and misinterpreted into something that does not spread the genuine love of God and humanity that we are all supposed to develop, but becomes the dog-like barking and criticism against every other religion that is not Christian. This does not only go on toward every religion outside of Christianity, but also within it between Catholics and Protestants and other denominations. It seems that this faith has become not something that promotes our similarities for cooperation, but our differences in that everyone who is of an unrelated Christian denomination are all going to hell.

In regard to India, there is a great number of missionaries of various denominations who are working there right now, all competing for the most number of converts. The Southern Baptists alone are a group that has nearly 100,000 career missionaries in North India, all working to spread the “good word.” We also find that in order to make converts from Hinduism some of the numerous Catholic priests in Southern India dress like sannyasis, and call their organizations ashramas. This is to

make Christianity more similar to the Vedic traditions. Bharat Natyam dance is also taught in the Christian schools, but with Christian symbols and meanings replacing the Vedic. This is all in the attempt to actively sway Hindus over to Christianity. Presently in the West, there are also churches that promote yoga, by calling it Christian yoga, replacing the Vedic symbols, names and meanings with Christian ones, as if that could really make a difference. Its origins are still from the Vedic tradition.

One way they are trying to bring Christianity deep into the culture of India is by superimposing its rituals, symbols, and even types of dress on the Hindu forms of the same. Thus, you will see the cross on the lotus, some priests dress in saffron, and some churches have the ambiance of a Hindu temple. If this keeps up, maybe one day Christianity will be more Hindu than Christian.

While traveling in the far Northeastern states of India I have seen some of the tactics that the Christian missionaries have used to help make converts, such as offering cheap polyester pants, blankets, and other goods to the tribals of the Northeast if they become Christian, or even offer motor bicycles if they help convert their brothers, which also means their wives and family. In other places like Madhya Pradesh, as noted in the Neogy Report, the missionaries give small loans on interest to the tribals, who cannot pay back such loans easily. However, if they become Christian, then such loans and the interest are dismissed. This is what goes on in the democracy of India, and under the tolerance of the Hindus, while if one such incidence would ever occur in a Muslim country, the result would be an immediate expulsion of the missionary from that nation.

Another trick that has been done is that missionaries, while treating the sick, will give medicine of no value and ask the tribal to take it while offering prayers to his local deity. Naturally, no cure of disease is likely to occur with the useless medicine. Then the missionary gives the tribal real medicine and asks the tribal to take it while offering prayers to Jesus. Then when there is a recovery, it is attributed to the power of Christ and not to the medicine. Such conversion activities take place these days more often in the tribal areas under the guise of social service. However, true social service should be done without expecting anything in return, including conversion.

Another thing that takes place is mass healings at meetings similar to revivals. What they do is pay people to attend the healings portraying themselves as being sick, or as invalids on crutches, etc., who then get called up and are miraculously cured of their disease. This is attributed to the power of Christ, which then convinces many tribals that

they too can benefit in various ways if they become Christian. This has not had much of an effect amongst the Brahmana classes, but the lower classes who attend are more vulnerable and are impressed by such things, and are then swayed toward Christianity. This is why Christian conversion tactics have been focused more toward the tribal areas than other regions of India. So these conversions are not taking place due to pure preaching of the Bible or the message of Jesus, but are accomplished by trickery and the emphasis on material facility. This is, of course, what is being objected to by the general Hindu population. However, when or if people convert for purely spiritual reasons, then there is no objection. But in the meantime, such conversions are tearing away at the social fabric of India and dividing communities, families, and neighborhoods between those who have converted and those who have not, those who are "saved" and those who will "go to hell."

Another way conversions are accomplished is with the promise to the Dalits or the lower caste Hindus that they will not have any more caste recognition by becoming Christians. However, after conversion many find out that this is not true. Even amongst the converted Christians there is found to be a caste mentality, with the lower castes forced to use separate doorways, separate seating, or have marriages performed only among equal caste Christians and in separate facilities, or to even be buried in separate cemeteries. When this becomes obvious to those who are newly converted, some of them want to come back to being Hindus again, which has been facilitated by such organizations as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

An interesting point is that in spite of these duplicitous ways of converting that the Christians have used, the Christian churches have threatened violence against the process of reconversion back to Hinduism that had been launched by the VHP. It is as if they do not want anyone to have the right to do what they are already doing. It was Rev. V. K. Nuh, secretary of the Nagaland Baptist Convention who said, "If someone tries to impose their faith, Christians in this region will not surrender. There will be a battle and we shall have no option. There will be a physical and religious war if attempts are made to propagate Hinduism by forceful means in the Northeast." In this same line of thinking, Rev. M. D. Oaugma, head of the Garo Baptist Convention of Meghalaya said, "It could be a threat to Christianity if we remain silent to the VHP's game plan of mass conversion. We shall have to fight, we shall have to resist." (*Maharashtra Herald*, July 11, 1998)

Of course, it is easy for Hindus to be nonchalant toward other religions because they feel that each spiritual path takes you toward God.

So in this light, it is alright to be tolerant of them or let them thrive. But the problem is that not all religions feel the same way toward Hinduism. Some feel that Hinduism is a culture that should be removed or destroyed. An example of this is that in Northeast India, in states like Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur, they have witnessed a surge of nearly 200% in their Christian population in the past 25 years due to the wily tactics of foreign missionaries. Their grasp is so strong now that practicing Hinduism is forbidden in some areas. Where is the democratic freedom in that? Hindus can no longer do worship or *arati* in the open because of the fanaticism in parts of the land. Durga *puja* has become almost obsolete as deities are destroyed or stolen in broad daylight. This confrontational climate has led to numerous militant outfits sponsored by the Church who are fighting for secession from India. So now the Northeastern portion of India wants to secede from it, and another part of India will be lost if this should happen.

If the Catholic Church in particular is supposed to espouse the message that God is love, and that it is by love of God and neighbor that mankind is saved, it certainly has not shown much of that kind of love toward any other religion. With the Pope's recent call for conversions in Asia, it certainly shows that it is not a friend of other religions, but still holds the goal that other spiritual paths should be brought down to be replaced by Christianity. This should be clearly understood. This is also the case with the Baptists and other denominations.

While I was in New Delhi, I also met with Mrs. Shanti Reddy, a member of a government agency called the National Committee for Women. She revealed that another thing that missionaries have done was to kidnap young Indian children. What one Christian missionary couple in Chennai was doing before they were arrested was to bribe tribals into giving their young baby girls to them. They would pay the tribals as little as 2000 to 5000 rupees for baby girls, and then turn around and sell the girls to foreigners for as much as $30,000 to $40,000. According to the records that had been confiscated from the missionaries' home, this had been a thriving business, and nearly 25 of such transactions had already taken place. The Indian authorities said they probably saved 300 baby girls from such a fate from the indications on the records they found. So this has been another one of the forms of activities that such missionaries do for their own benefit and profit against the real interest of India. However, whenever Hindus react with force against such people, they are labeled as fundamentalists, antagonists, communalists, or worse. But how can you expect that Hindus should not display serious and violent reactions when such activities become obvious? It usually takes a lot to

make Hindus react, as they are often a most pacifistic and tolerant people. This is also why they make lousy terrorists, they just do not see things that way.

Nonetheless, another way that India is slowly losing its Vedic culture is through the process of secular or English and Christian education. Of course, in public schools all Vedic books have been removed from the curriculum. So there are no possibilities to study the ancient Indian literature or art in such institutions. So Vedic values are no longer part of what the children are taught. Furthermore, the Christian schools, often staffed by Christian missionaries, can teach Christian values in their classes, and include a short study of the Bible everyday, or the Koran if it's an Islamic school. The so-called secular government has even helped them with free land and facilities. Since these schools offer English in their education, along with good discipline, many of the middle classes of Indians are favoring sending their children to these schools. Today, in the Indian cities, many of the parents of children are the graduates of Christian schools, who also send there own children to such schools. As this trend continues, there will be a decreasing number of Hindus in the educated sector. Thus, children in India, with the help of the secular government, are learning Christian values and perceiving their own history and culture as something less than honorable. They are taught that such important books as the *Bhagavad-gita*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavata Purana* and other Vedic texts are nothing more than mythology, and not a result of one of the most profound civilizations in the world. They are also taught that their own God is but a demon and the only real way to God is through Jesus.

An example of this is that a few devotees from the New Delhi Iskcon (Hare Krishna) temple go out and give presentations to the children's classes in schools. Some of the questions that are asked by the children are, "Who is your God?" and "What can your God do for me?" and so on. Obviously, these questions are nothing but a direct result of the Christian and English oriented education that these children are receiving. Now I ask anyone, isn't this practically a covert form of conversion? This form of education indoctrinates the children to doubt their own culture, and disrespect their own history and traditions, and understand very little about it. As a result of this form of education, the Hindu population is slowly forgetting the unique history and lofty culture of their homeland.

As I traveled around, it was not unusual to see elementary schools around India with a name something like "Saint Xavier's School." People should know that this Francis Xavier, who is now one of

the greatest so-called "saints," feverishly declared, "When I have finished baptizing the people, I order them to destroy the huts in which they keep their idols; and I have them break the statues of their idols into tiny pieces, since they are now Christians. I could never come to an end describing to you the great consolation which fills my soul when I see idols being destroyed by the hands of those who had been idolaters." (From "*The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*," 1993, pp 117-8) This was his goal, to destroy Indian culture and make India a Christian nation. So it is ironic that now India embraces the schools that honor him in this way. How could they not know his true intention?

What is often not recognized is that up until recently, for the last 50 years the politicians who have been directing the destiny of India are the ones who have an anti-Hindu attitude. They have set the economic direction and the educational policies that the country has been forced to follow. They have also promised the protection of the religious minorities with the hopes of acquiring votes. This has been one of the reasons why the secularists in the Congress party have treated everything that is Hindu with disdain.

Another aspect of the loss of Vedic culture in India is that the younger Indian people, especially ages from 15 to 25, are readily giving up Vedic customs to follow the more decadent so-called freedoms of the West. They see the western movies, they read what the celebrities say in the papers, and they admire them and want to adopt their forms of dress and lifestyles. Thus, in the big cities like Mumbai you have Indian couples living together without marriage, which is something you never would have seen before a few years back. Now the Vedic principles are looked upon as something obsolete, something that restricts the style that those who look to the West want to adopt. Thus, they are leaving Indian traditions behind and losing respect for anything Vedic. In this way, they adopt foreign standards, or lose so much respect for Indian and Vedic values that they become embarrassed to admit their Hindu background and heritage. Furthermore, Sanskrit scholars at the temples are also slowly dying out, and the modern Indians view the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as merely myths or gaudy television shows.

Although India has been invaded by outsiders so many times and has always survived, what we are talking about is more than mere property or geography. What is actually being threatened is the basis of Indian culture itself. As younger generations give up their Vedic heritage, even if they return to it later when they are older and looking for more philosophical support, with whatever percentage of loss occurs

with each generation, time has shown that it is never fully recovered. A portion of it is lost forever.

Another way of looking at this is that India presently enjoys about an 85% Hindu majority in its population. This may sound quite significant, but in actuality this includes 15% Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains. So it is really only a 70% majority. How many more generations will go by before we see a big drop in this percentage due to the process of secular (meaning Christian or English, or even Islamic) education, or with the present rate of conversions by tactless Christians? This percentage could easily drop well below 50% in only a few more generations at the present rate of change.

How many more generations will it take before the Hindu majority is no longer a majority, but a minority in its own country? As Hinduism declines, you will see that the demands on the government and those voted into politics will also change, and the laws will also alter more in favor of the increasing minority religions at the expense of declining Hinduism. Then as the years go by there will appear only small clusters of Hindu or Vedic communities, most likely centered around prominent holy places, until the more aggressive religions act in ways to diminish these as well, in the same way that they are presently doing in other countries.

The point of all this information is that it is time for all Hindus and supporters and followers of the Vedic culture, Sanatana-dharma, to realize what is actually happening and give up your timidness or nonchalance and speak out while such freedom still exists. We must become more pro-active for defending this culture. The point is that if you do not take it seriously, I can assure you that there are others who take this inaction and tolerance extremely seriously to promote their own goals and religions in India. It is because of this that India may not always remain the homeland of an active and thriving Vedic culture as it is now. We need to protect whatever is left of it and maintain the present liberties that Hindus or followers of Vedic culture still have in India. Then we all can continue to engage in Vedic traditions without hindrance, and with full freedom. For this, we need to unite ourselves in a concerted effort to make this happen. And it most certainly is possible.

Not long ago, as told to me by Professor Subhash Kak, it was noted in a reputable publication that now 1% of the Russian population claim that they are Hindu. The article stated that this was primarily due to the preaching efforts of Iskcon. This shows a major social impact. This shows what is possible if we can work together in a concerted effort. This is why I am convinced that if we all work in a pro-active way under

the banner of a united family of Vedic followers, or Global Vedic Community, we can keep and even expand the present freedoms that we now have to practice Vedic and indigenous traditions, and keep India as the homeland of Vedic culture, the most ancient roots of humanity.

India must be protected and kept as the homeland and center of the Vedic heritage, Sanatana-dharma, Hinduism. Without it, what is its value, in spite of whatever else it accomplishes? The value of Hinduism and India are clearly expressed in the words of the famous English theosophist Dr. Annie Besant. She put great emphasis on the value of India, its history, the Vedic culture, and its importance to the world. As written in the cover notes from the book, *Hindus, Life-Line of India*, by G. M. Jagtiani, she says: "After a study of some forty years and more of the great religions of the world, I find none so perfect, none so scientific, none so philosophic, and none so spiritual as the great religion known by the name of Hinduism. The more you know it, the more you will love it; the more you try to understand it, the more deeply you will value it. Make no mistake; without Hinduism, India has no future. Hinduism is the soil into which India's roots are struck, and torn of that she will inevitably wither, as a tree torn out from its place. Many are the religions and many are the races flourishing in India, but none of them stretches back into the far dawn of her past, nor are they necessary for her endurance as a nation. Everyone might pass away as they came and India would still remain. But let Hinduism vanish and what is she? A geographical expression of the past, a dim memory of a perished glory, her literature, her art, her monuments, all have Hindudom written across them. And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? India alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

In this light, it is absolutely necessary that as followers of Sanatana-dharma, Vedic culture, we realize that we need to repair whatever differences we have between us regarding whatever issues there may be. This is necessary in order to work with some cooperation with whomever we can if we expect to be a substantial force in defending the Vedic cause. Otherwise, all the issues that invariably come up, although these should not be ignored, should not take so much of our attention that our preaching or sharing or promoting of our culture stops. Otherwise, we will only serve as contributors to the continuing deterioration of all spiritual standards as the age of Kali-yuga progresses. This preaching, of course, means that we must all stay in touch with and practice the Vedic standards, and be ready to let others know of its

advantages, and to defend it from those who wish to see its demise. We must all act as Vedic Ambassadors.

We cannot allow ourselves to be led into the danger of endless debate that leads to inaction. We all must be pro-active in some way to help defend and spread Vedic culture. Then we can work together to keep the freedom we presently have to practice the Vedic traditions and keep India as the homeland of a thriving, dynamic, and still living tradition. Such freedom does not come without its challenges, and we must be prepared as a society to meet those challenges. To take such freedoms for granted means that it is only a matter of time before they are lost. And that is exactly what some people want to happen. So we must be willing to work all the harder to prevent such a decline of our Vedic heritage.

CHAPTER THREE

Vedic Culture: The Last Bastion of Deep Spiritual Truth

Why would Vedic culture be called the last bastion of deep spiritual truth? It does not take much to understand, at least after a little investigation, that the Vedic process of spiritual advancement promotes individual freedom of thought, complete liberty of inquiry, and the privilege of independent and personal development through one's own spiritual experiences. This degree of latitude for self-discovery is found in few other cultures or spiritual processes.

The fact is that the Vedic literature consists of the oldest and most complete spiritual scriptures available. It contains more in-depth knowledge of the identity of the spiritual being and its connection with the universe and God than most anywhere else. It provides more information about the spiritual domain, the characteristics of God and our relationship with the Supreme.

Furthermore, the spiritual principles in the Vedic system are universal, meaning they can be applied in any time or place in the universe. In fact, even a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, or anyone can understand his or her own religion more deeply by investigating the Vedic spiritual knowledge.

The Vedic system expects the individual to progress and not merely stay on the level of blind faith. The Vedic path does not rely on faith or beliefs alone, but offers the methodologies that a person can use to refine one's consciousness. Then he or she can personally perceive the higher levels of reality and spiritual truths of which the Vedic instructions speak. In fact, the many Vedic holy men are often those who have had various levels of success in experiencing aspects of spiritual reality, and then can relay that information to others. This is also why portions of Vedic philosophy are expressions of one's spiritual experience, followed by instructions enabling others to reach that same experience in perceiving the Absolute Truth.

The Vedic process allows full freedom to investigate spiritual matters and for one to ask all the questions that may come to mind, without restrictions or the possibility of being called a doubting person or a blasphemer as you find in other religions. The Vedic approach knows that the Absolute can be perceived in different ways, thus the Vedic system accommodates this and allows for the individual to pursue the level of Truth that he or she wants to perceive. The Vedic path also makes no restrictions on our right to use whatever resources we can to help ourselves understand our spiritual nature. This is why Vedic followers can look at any religion and find truth in it.

The Vedic system also acknowledges that we all have a unique relationship with God, and that this does not depend on the approval of a church, an institution, or a cleric or priest. It is eternal. The Vedic process merely provides the means or methodologies by which we can awaken that relationship and the awareness of our spiritual identity. By this approach, we stimulate our own perception of spiritual reality rather than merely being forced to accept a dogma presented by some religious institution.

On the other hand, we see the conventional religions of the West. They are often monotheistic constructs that are based primarily on faith, beliefs, and fear. Their faith is often directed toward the idea that if you follow what your church authorities tell you, or what you read in your scripture, you will go to heaven and be “saved.” Belief usually amounts to accepting something that is still beyond your experience. And fear in most religions is based on the idea that if you do not follow the tenants of your faith or church, or if you question it, you may find yourself being excommunicated and outcaste from your religion, or even told that you will go to hell. Thus, you will have no relationship or connection with God. Fear in this regard is also displayed as a fanatical defense of one’s ideas or religion, that everyone else but you and your clan are going to hell and that you are the only ones who really know the truth. In this way, they allow for little freedom of thought or inquiry, or for the individual to seek out answers to questions that are not described in its scripture. Anything that is not included is labeled as either demonic or will lead one to hell. This is what I call being in “The Prison of Religion”.

THE PRISON OF RELIGION

The reason why I call it "The Prison of Religion" is that religion, when used improperly or without the real essence of spiritual truth, can also be a way of confining and restricting people of their understanding of the universe and themselves through the use of fear, guilt, violence, and the oppression of anything that shows a different view than what is being indoctrinated into society through a particular religion. It has been the most militant of religions that has suppressed the ancient avenues of reaching higher levels of understanding our multidimensional nature. Thus, by mere blind faith in whatever the church or priests are giving us, or allowing us to know, we are kept in a lower consciousness than what is really possible. In this way, higher realms of thought, wisdom, love, and knowledge are kept away from the masses. After all, knowledge is power, which means your ignorance is my strength. To keep power over others, the church has systematically abolished a wide range of spiritual and esoteric knowledge that would, otherwise, give mankind the ultimate freedom. And because people who understand their true spiritual nature and the power that lies within them become impossible to manipulate, it is necessary to keep this knowledge hidden. So the idea would be to keep the truly spiritual knowledge concealed while creating and perpetuating a religion, or a standard of "science," that keeps people bound by the above mentioned factors: fear, guilt, violence, and intimidation.

To tread outside the accepted jurisdiction of knowledge or understanding, or outside the rules of the institution, will bring fear. Questioning the present system, or doubting its effectiveness, or desiring to know more about God or whatever else you would like to understand than what the church provides, will bring guilt, at least for those who consider themselves dedicated followers. In this way, some churches or religions have tried to make such ancient sciences as astrology, yoga, meditation, or the deepest understandings of the soul, and much more, to look evil or even absurd, and, thus, be dismissed, or preferably even outlawed. We need to understand and recognize this pattern, which is used in numerous places in the world.

In this regard, reports have been given about how huge libraries and collections of ancient and esoteric books have been destroyed or were kept out of circulation from the public. This indicates the methodical removal of various levels of spiritual and metaphysical knowledge from society, while claiming that anything other than the established doctrine of the church is satanic, evil, and hell-bound. The Christian Inquisition, for example, was a wonderful method of producing

this effect. Even today we can see how some people are so influenced by this tyrannical tendency that they still are afraid of looking at anything other than what the Church condones. However, most of these people are totally unaware of the "pagan" heritage found in Christianity or Judaism, which makes it very similar to pre-Christian ways, but with a different name. It is practically the same medicine yet in a different bottle. To remove this understanding from public knowledge, it became necessary that whenever Christianity or other militant religions conquered a country or culture, the first thing that was done was to capture or destroy all of the ancient sacred texts. However, any organization that destroys the ancient knowledge and historical records of a civilization is never going to present the true history of the world, or the spiritual wisdom of any previous culture. Thus, the view of history is controlled and the population is kept in ignorance and under subtle restraint. And the people who are allowed to understand any of the truth are those of the elite or who are already in power.

By taking a look at the history of the conventional or western religions, for example, a person can see to what extent such an institution will go to maintain power and control, especially when it feels threatened by what it does not understand. Furthermore, the dark history of Christianity, for example, represents the fanatically narrow-minded side of it that has continued to the present day in the form of fundamentalists thinking that if a religion or culture is not Christian, then it must be of the devil. Or at least its followers will not go to heaven. Such people are often ready to dismiss or criticize other spiritual paths and cultures without understanding them. They may see a ceremony or ritual of another religion and immediately say it is heathen or devil worship, without realizing that it is the worship of the same Supreme Being that they worship.

The point is that all people have to have the freedom to find themselves to the fullest extent on whatever path it takes, providing it is a bona fide or genuine path. So how do we make sure we can continue to have this freedom? By understanding each other and different cultures of the world and the various paths of self-discovery. And by recognizing the value that they have to offer, as we find in the Eastern traditions, such as Sanatana-dharma. We must also bury our preconceived prejudices that are based on our immature feelings of superiority because, spiritually speaking, we are all the same. We just have to attain that spiritual vision to see the reality of it. And the path we take to do that is the only difference among us.

One problem with the religions that primarily are based on belief and faith is that they can become an effective means of manipulating the masses who follow it. If you can convince people to believe that by doing something they can go to heaven, then you can get them to do almost anything. For example, Pope Urban II implied to the soldiers who were going out on the first crusade that if they died in the name of Christ, they would ascend to heaven and live in the association of God. Thus, they rode out to fearlessly and mercilessly conquer the "heathens" or non-believers, and were willing to die to reach heaven.

This is the same effect we see with the Palestinian youth, that if they die in the name of Islam they will immediately go to the seventh level of heaven and take pleasure in wondrous gardens in the company of beautiful virgins. The more fantastic the heaven, the more hope and conviction will be seen in the followers.

Another problem with this is that the beliefs that are given to you to accept often change with time, or according to the needs of the church to keep a congregation. As explained in an issue of Newsweek magazine (August 12, 2002), the concept of heaven has changed with the ages. "Dante saw heaven as the universe, and Thomas Aquinas thought of it as a brilliant place, full of light and knowledge. In the 18th century, Emanuel Swedenborg imagined heaven as a tangible world, with public gardens and parks." Nowadays you can imagine heaven to be whatever you need it to be. This gives impetus for you to do whatever you feel you should do for your beliefs, and have it justified by your religion. However, in actuality, in the Bible, the Koran, or Torah, there is little in the way of specific information of where or what is heaven. And this leaves much for the imagination.

Another problem with religious processes that rely mostly on faith and belief is that peer pressure and the need for conformity and acceptance or approval stifles and restricts one's ability to develop or inquire to one's fullest. We often see children tolerated for their deep and thoughtful questions on spiritual themes, while the adults fear to reveal their ignorance of the topics or even stifle a child's inquisitiveness, or anybody else's if they seem to ask too many questions. So such religions act like self-policing institutions wherein individuals are not encouraged to develop their own spiritual realizations or ask too many questions, or show any doubts or uncertainties regarding the teachings. They are encouraged to leave it up to faith and the dictates of the institution. They are told that we are not meant to know certain things, and that faith alone in a particular savior or the power of the church is enough to take you to heaven. But if you lack faith or question it, or do not follow the dictates

of the church or scripture, you will not go to heaven. You will not receive God's grace. Thus, you must look good in the eyes of the church authorities and your fellow members or there will be no room for you, and, thus, you will be sent to hell.

The second kind of fear is the fear that you may be wrong, or the church and its doctrines may be wrong, or there may be weaknesses in its philosophy. So people become defensive of their beliefs, defending it like life itself. Thus, they condemn and criticize those who are of other religions without trying to understand them. Sometimes you can observe this amongst the sects in the same religion. We already see so many divisions within Christianity, as well as Islam and Judaism. And each one often feels they are the only ones that are true followers of Jesus or Mohammed, and all others are going to hell. So it can become extremely divisive even within the same faith.

In fact, some people of particular religions may feel it is their God-given mandate that when someone is a so-called non-believer, he should be converted and "saved" at whatever cost, and then deprived of any freedom to follow an alternative view. A person in another religion may brand "nonbelievers" as infidels, and thus feel it is his duty to convert, destroy, or even kill such a person. In either case, they may use coercion, manipulation, or simply take advantage of poor and vulnerable people to bring them over to their faith. And in both cases, the people of these religions feel they are doing God's work, and that they are justified in what they do.

The premise that all spiritual knowledge must be connected with one distinct or localized savior is itself a stifling factor in allowing individuals to progress in spiritual understanding. There is so much more that could be learned if they did not feel that if something is not connected with their particular savior or scripture, then it must be Satanic. In this way, if it is not in the Bible or Koran, for example, they refuse to acknowledge the value of any additional spiritual knowledge if it comes from a different culture or source. Thus, they act with fear or contempt toward anything outside their own sphere of familiarity or acceptability, or like people who are proud of their own ignorance and narrow-mindedness.

The straightjacket of Western theological dogma keeps a person from looking at additional resources that could supply answers for questions not considered in western thought, or at possibilities that are elementary in Eastern traditions. What is wrong with learning newer ways of connecting with our higher selves, and with each other and with God? What is wrong with allowing our hearts and minds to expand with

new vibrancy, new insights and confidence? Why not allow ourselves new hope and understanding in regard to the purpose of the universe and the nature of God, even if we look to different sources of knowledge? Who knows what additional information we can add to what we already know, or newer ways to incorporate and develop ourselves into people who are better and more aware and spiritually developed. This is natural for those who participate in the Vedic system.

In light of this it is interesting to point out that in 1991 a letter was released from the Vatican to the Bishops which criticized zen and such spiritual practices as yoga and meditation. The letter was written by Cardinal Ratzinger, who is now the Pope at the time of this writing, but the document was also approved by Pope John Paul II. The letter warned against the sensations of spiritual well-being that one gets from practicing yoga or meditation, and said that this could lead to schizophrenia, moral deviations, or even psychic disorders, and degenerate to a cult of the body. Now on what basis do they make these claims? Are they simply using fear tactics to dissuade people from investigating such paths? Of course, if one improperly practices a complicated form of yoga, such as *kundalini-yoga*, there may be some adverse affects. But for the most part, yoga and real transcendental meditation means to fix the mind and become absorbed, at least for certain lengths of time, on that which is transcendent, which is God. This is real spirituality. So what is wrong with this when this is the goal of any spiritual path? Why would they issue such a letter, unless they are once again simply trying to condemn every other form of religion? If this is the case, this signifies that they are not really interested in true spirituality or in helping people with spiritual advancement. Yoga and meditation have existed for thousands of years before Christianity ever came along. Why should people not look at other cultures to get answers and experiences that are not found in conventional Western religions? The reluctance to do so is merely a reflection of the fear and misunderstanding that people have. Nonetheless, many Christians have risen to new levels of understanding biblical teachings by studying and practicing various aspects of the Vedic path.

We have to remember that a true religion paves the way for everyone to become spiritually aware, and to establish his or her own relationship with the Supreme. And the Vedic system is an ideal means for supplying that. If a religion is not based on the higher principles of self-realization, but is merely based on dogmatic rules and regulations that it forces on others, then it becomes a trap based on fear, guilt, oppression, and intimidation. One must not be afraid to break free from

such a trap. It is greater to see God's love manifested in many sages belonging to different traditions at different times and places, among different people. Thus, the Vedic spiritual knowledge is for everyone and can assist anyone in their spiritual development. After all, if I, a Westerner can do it, then anyone can do it.

THE FREEDOM IN VEDIC CULTURE

It is refreshing to see that you usually do not have the kind of divisiveness or criticism that is described above in the Vedic system. It is much more open and provides the individual the freedom to pursue the level of experience that he or she needs for his or her own development and still be a part of the Vedic process. You can especially see this at such huge gatherings as the Kumbha Mela festival where millions of people come together from all aspects and schools of thought within the Vedic fold. It shows that anyone can pursue their own level of spiritual development and inquiry without being restricted from within an institution or church. One can become a part of whatever line of spiritual thought or practice one needs to be in and still be considered on the Vedic path, though there are various systems that bring a person to different levels of development, consciousness, and higher perception.

For these reasons, India must remain the homeland of a living and dynamic Vedic culture. This will allow the world to retain some of the deepest knowledge and methods of attaining the most profound spiritual insights that have been known to mankind. Thus, India should defend itself from the risk of further partition or divisions of its land. If India is divided up any more, and portions of the country are taken by others, Vedic culture could dwindle or even be lost over the long-term, except for small colonies of Vedic practitioners here and there. This may indeed be what many people would like to see. Yet, if Vedic culture is lost, the world will not even realize the treasure of human development that will disappear. Then such deep spiritual knowledge and insights will begin to permanently fade away from society.

Once India and Vedic culture is diluted or stamped out, along with other decreasing numbers of indigenous traditions within it, then in time the whole world will be fitted with the straightjacket of Western thought and monotheistic religion. Thus, it will be more easily controlled by the establishment, whether that be government or religious, etc. Then individual freedom for the pursuit of higher understanding and spiritual

happiness will be limited to the constraints as dictated by whatever regional monotheistic views reign in that area.

The Vedic culture and philosophy offers deep insights into spiritual knowledge that can be found no where else. It provides for levels of thought and knowledge of the soul and the Supreme and the spiritual reality that are hardly matched elsewhere. I can safely say this because I, having been raised a practicing Christian, also seriously studied in depth all the major religions, and continue to do so, before studying and then taking up the Vedic path. The Vedic philosophy clearly outlines the processes by which a person can uplift or purify one's own consciousness to perceive for themselves the spiritual strata and recognize one's true spiritual identity, which is the essence of all spiritual progress, and from which all further development grows. Many are those noteworthy sages and saints of the past who have followed this path successfully, and left profound teachings for the rest of us. For this reason, Vedic culture is the last bastion of deep and genuine spiritual truth and freedom. It is a culture that allows full liberty of investigation for the individual to practice and reach the highest levels of spiritual perception known to humanity. This is also why it should be clearly understood and preserved for the benefit of all.

PART TWO

INDIA'S HISTORY AND ITS BATTLES TO PROTECT ITS CULTURE

CHAPTER FOUR

Early Invasions and The Weaknesses of India

If India, the land once known as Bharata Varsha, was so strong, then why did it seem like it was so easily conquered by outsiders who invaded it and then ruled over it for so many years?

We should remember that the earliest of invaders into India were actually defeated. They did not have an easy time of entering the country to do as they liked. Some of these were Queen Semiramis of Babylonia in the 8th century BCE, and Cyrus the Great of Iran in the 6th century BCE. They had attacked India with massive armies and met with defeat at the borders, fleeing with few survivors.

Of course, there was also Alexander who invaded and made it into Northern India, but then was stumped by the brave resistance of the warriors from a few republics that stopped his army from going any farther. One of these armies of resistance to Alexander was Pushkalavati, not far from modern Peshawar. This was ruled by Queen Cleophis, where she and 7,000 of her soldiers died in defending the state. It was in this battle wherein Alexander himself was injured and suffered a setback in his campaign of eleven years to conquer the world.

Alexander was the King of Macedonia, a nation north of the city-states of ancient Greece, which was heavily influenced by the Hellenic (Greek) culture. Alexander was just 21 years old in the year 336 BCE when he decided to invade India, after having conquered much of Asia Minor and the Middle East.

Alexander really met his challenge when he reached the area beyond the Jhelum River in a confrontation with the brave warrior-emperor Porus. King Porus took up a position to prevent Alexander from crossing the Hydaspes River. Porus was a huge man, and when mounted on his war elephant he looked in the same proportion as an ordinary man on a horse. Nonetheless, after a long battle Porus was defeated, but the fight made Alexander take second thoughts about this challenge, reflecting that this danger met his courage. Such a difficult victory over

only 22,000 Indians [May, 326 BCE] took the edge off the courage of the Macedonians.

Porus was treated well by Alexander when captured, and was left in charge of his former kingdom. It was the dedicated patriotism of the armies that Alexander's troops met, rather than mercenary forces, that made many of them, along with top commanders, protest his continued efforts in the region. Also, having met with serious losses at the hands of a woman ruler of a small republic was reason to give them all second thoughts on what else they might find if they proceeded farther into India. They had already heard of the reputation of the Nandas who ruled over a large part of the country called Magadha. They also had no enthusiasm for Alexander's proposed crossing of the Ganges, a river said to be four miles wide and six hundred feet deep, only to encounter an army on the other side consisting of 200,000 infantry, 80,000 cavalry, 8,000 chariots, and 6,000 war elephants. Furthermore, the agonizing heat of India's northwest region was wearing them down. Thereafter, Alexander left India by sea in 325 BCE. On a flotilla of rafts and barges, Alexander's army floated down the Indus River.

Along the way, they stopped to take some fortified cities, and at one of them Alexander came very close to losing his life. Alexander was the first one up the ladders onto the wall of the city of the Mallians, and then he jumped down into the town with only two of his guards behind him. Before the rest of the Macedonians could catch up and save him, Alexander had taken an arrow in the ribs and had been knocked dizzy by a club. He was unconscious when they carried him away, and he fainted when the doctors cut out the arrow. Rumors quickly spread that Alexander was dead. He had died on his way home in 323 BCE.

Even Seleucus Nicator, Alexander's successor in East Asia, tried to invade India and did conquer some territory, but then had to flee and even pay homage to the Indian emperor at the time through a matrimonial alliance. So India and its warriors were not to be taken lightly.

One thing that helped protect India was the size of its territory. This is an important point when we consider how much of it has been taken from India in modern times, and why protecting the area of Kashmir, and Northeast India on the border of China's occupation in Tibet and other areas must be maintained. The weaknesses of the Indian peninsula were the Northwestern passes, which any invading armies had to encounter before reaching India. While India's territory extended beyond the Indus, and held the kingdom of Gandhara, Peshawar, parts of Afghanistan, and Kashmir, it was protected. It was because these

kingdoms fell that allowed Alexander's armies to march through the Northwestern passes and into India. It was only after that episode when the politicians began to plan for the unification of India in order to better defend itself. Thus, it was a lack of unity that was another weakness of India that allowed for others to conquer it.

Thereafter began the great Mauryan Empire and the rule of the great Emperor Chandra Gupta. This was a wonderful empire, based on organization of its administration, holding its cultural values, and the productiveness of the people. It was basically a constitutional monarchy, even before the Europeans. The point is that there may have been great fratricidal wars in India, but early India also provided for great freedoms, much the opposite of what some historians, like Basham, describes. Much of the organization of early Indian society was like the tribal system, in which everyone was equal but overseen by its assembly of elders, above which was the king, who took counsel from the priests or Brahmanas. Later, many of these kingdoms took the shape of republics with their own armies, democratic assemblies, and civil administrations. These existed as such long before the Greek forms of democracy. Only after there was a need to unify India following the early invasions did the monarchical form of government take root again. In this case, the king or emperor was the main protector of Dharma, not a selfish and despotic ruler. This had always been a major focus on Indian society, to protect Sanatana-dharma for the future progress and civility of all people.

Even though in most cases in early India the king was a Hindu, Hinduism itself was never proclaimed as the state religion. Other sects also had their freedoms to function in their own way. India has always welcomed other religions into its fold. It is only when it has become obvious that the new religions that have entered India do not offer back the same respect to its hosting culture that it has become necessary to unite the Hindus in a stronger manner.

The interesting thing is that the first invaders into India, no matter how cruel and savage, were not directly against the Vedic culture. No matter whether it was the Greeks, Scythians, Kushans, or the Hunas, they never specifically attacked the Dharma or the temples or holy symbols themselves. In fact, there is evidence here and there that some became good Shaivites, or Vaishnavas, or even Buddhists once they settled into the society. Some of them became absorbed into the civilization, many in Rajasthan, where they became warriors known as Rajputs.

It was only the Muslims who came and directly attacked anything that was non-Islamic. They acted in a way that anything that

was connected with or was a symbol of the Dharma had to be destroyed. We will see this more clearly as we proceed through this book. It was the Muslims who then targeted the civilian population after winning any battles, and then burnt down villages and towns. They would kill the cows, Brahmanas and priests, destroy the temples, burn down monasteries, and indulge in mass murders. Others were captured and sent off as slaves. The treasures and booty, even from the dead bodies, was a measure of their success. And they called themselves *mujahids* (holy warriors) and *ghazis* (killers of kafirs or infidels). Hindus could hardly understand this new disposition of these invaders, with this unwarranted cruelty and savagery. They had never experienced anything like it.

THE FIRST ATTACKS BY ISLAM

Before the entrance of Islam into India, evidence shows that Arab trading ships and merchants had been traveling to the Malabar Coast, where they practiced their pre-Islamic religions. Only later did they convert to Islam, after which nothing much changed in their relationship with India. The Hindu leaders did not interfere. Only after political Islam entered India in 712 CE, with the Arab conquest of Sindh, ninety years after founding Islam in Saudi Arabia, was there striking changes.

The first Islamic marauders are often called *Yavanas* (Greeks), *Turuskas* (Turks), *Tajikas* (Persians), and especially as *mlecchas*, which means those who are uncultured outcastes with no regard for Vedic Dharma.

The first 16 invasion attempts of the Arab Muslims failed completely. But the 17th attempt to invade India by Muhammad bin Kasim, which was carried out against the wishes of the Kalifate, was successful. Muhammad bin Kasim marched to Sindh with 15,000 men. He arrived at Debal, a port city near the modern Karachi, in 711. There he was bolstered by the arrival of his artillery by sea, and took the town.

Sindh was first captured by the Muslims after a small but dramatic incident. It was in 712 when a shipwreck with the wives and children of Arab traders sailing from Sri Lanka to Mecca caused them to ground in the Gulf of Debal. They were captured and presented before the Hindu king, Dahir of the Chach dynasty. When this news was received by Hajjaj, the Arab governor of Iraq, he became furious. So he sent his nephew and son-in-law, Muhammad bin Kasim, who was seventeen at the time, with a huge army to punish King Dahir and

retrieve the Muslims. They killed Dahir and conquered his kingdom. Dahir's queen nonetheless had put up mighty resistance. The kingdom to the north, Multan, also fell.

Within this new kingdom of Arab Muslims, no one else was Muslim. And the Koran said that only Jews and Christians, as "people of the book," could be tolerated. All other non-Muslims should have a choice of converting or die. However, Kasim decided to treat them in the same manner as "people of the book." This was later supported by the *ulamas* or Islamic scholars. Thus, the Hindus and Buddhist were allowed to practice their own religion. Nonetheless, Kasim sent back to his uncle large amounts of cash, treasure, and slaves.

Why this conquest appeared to be fairly easy was because not only did Kasim have a large army, but also the lack of unity in the kingdom of Debal. Dahir was a Brahmana ruler, having acquired the kingdom from the previous Rajput rulers. So there was some inter-caste and inter-religious tension that hindered the necessary unity needed in defending the kingdom. Furthermore, Dahir was known for his liberality and secularism, and allowed not only Arab Muslim traders to settle there, but also Buddhists and Parsis to practice their path with no interference. Dahir had also allowed refuge to some Sassanians who had recently been defeated by the Arabs in Persia. So Kasim's invasion may have been a retaliatory strike against the Sassanians and a means to stop any strike from a Sassanian-Sindh attack against Arabs in Persia.

In any case, Dahir was not prepared, was overly tolerant, lackadaisical, and when he needed strength the most, it was not there. This is not all that dissimilar from the situation we find in India today amongst its politicians who focus more on their own political career than on the future and strength of the country and people. And this was but one of the first attacks by Islam, which certainly paved the way for what happened next.

This was followed by Kasim's conquest of Alor, located north of Hyderabad, in June, 712. The next year Kasim also conquered the important city of Multan.

From the time of the first Muslim invasions, India's history became a long series of attacks, massacres of thousands of people, and destructions of thousands of temples. And this was all in the name of "holy war" for the pleasing of Allah. Even the American historian Will Durant stated that the Islamic conquest of India is probably "the bloodiest story in history. . . its evident moral is that civilization is a precious good, whose delicate complex order and freedom can at any moment be overthrown by barbarians invading from without and

multiplying from within." If this is not a warning for considering in the present time, then I do not know what is.

Although at the time, Muhammad bin Kasim had occupied some cities in Sindh, his successors led some raids towards Punjab, Rajasthan, and Saurashtra, but they were defeated and driven back. By the middle of the 8th century, they controlled only the cities of Multan and Mansurah. It was over 200 years later that Alptigin the Turk, in 963, seized Ghazni, the capital of Zabul. And it was his successor, Subuktigin, who seized Kabul from the Hindu Shahiyas just before his death in 997. It is said that the conquest of Afghanistan near 1000 CE was followed by the slaughter of the entire Hindu population within the area. That is why the region is called Hindu Kush, meaning "Hindu slaughter," where Hindu slaves from the Indian subcontinent were slaughtered in harsh Afghan mountains to the extent that their blood formed streams that flowed down the hillsides.

It was Subuktigin's son, Mahmoud Ghazni, who went on to conquer the Northwest Frontier and part of the Punjab, and led 17 attacks into India between 1000 and 1027. His main interest was in destroying temples, taking treasures which funded his attacks, capturing slaves, and killing the infidels. He was extremely cruel, and had a goal to make such an attack on India every year in order to destroy Vedic culture and wipe out what he called idolatry.

Nonetheless, there were times when he had to make a hasty retreat in the face of the Hindu counterattacks. After Mahmoud died in 1030, the Jats and Gakkhars gave relentless trouble to the Muslims of Sindh and the Punjab. Lahore became the capital of the later Ghaznavids when they were pushed out of Afghanistan by the Ghurids in the last quarter of the 12th century. It was another 150 years before Muhammad Ghuri planned his invasions in an attempt to conquer India. He first tried to attack Gujarat in 1178, which met with disaster from the defenses of the Chaulukyas, and he almost lost his life. At Tarain in 1191 he was carried half-dead from the battlefield. Finally, in 1192, he won his first victory over the Hindus by resorting to cruel trickery which the chivalrous Rajputs did not foresee. In this way, it was not so easy for the Muslim attackers to have their way with the Hindu warriors.

Nonetheless, Muhammad Ghuri occupied the Chauhan kingdom of Haryana, Ajmer, Aligarh, and Bayana in 1192-3, and the Gahadvad kingdom of UP in 1194-5. His generals went on to conquer South Bihar, West and North Bengal, and parts of Bundelkhand. Finally, he was assassinated by the Gakkhars in 1206. The Shamsi dynasty was

established in Delhi in 1210, which were followed by several other Muslim dynasties.

The Bahmani sultans of central India made a rule to kill 100,000 Hindus every year. And in 1399, Timur killed 100,000 Hindus in a single day, plus more at other times. It is suggested by the historian K. S. Lal that between the year 1000 and 1525, the Hindu population decreased by as many as 80 million. This is probably the biggest holocaust in the history of the whole world, right there in India. Yet, how many people have either forgotten this threat to the Indian Hindu population, or have never heard or learned about it? This negation of Indian history is itself a crime against its population when the people should know and learn lessons from the past.

THE MAIN FAILURE AND WEAKNESS OF INDIA

The main failure of India against such attacks was the lack of unity amongst its society and between its kingdoms. For example, the three most important of the Rajput states in north India were the Gahrwals of Kanauj, the Paramaras of Malwa, and the Chauhans of Ajmer. There were other smaller dynasties in different parts of the country, such as the Kalachuris in the area around Jabalpur, the Chandellas in Bundelkhand, the Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Tomars of Delhi, etc. Bengal remained under the control of the Palas and later, the Senas.

There was a continuous struggle and warfare between the various Rajput states. It was these rivalries which made it impossible for the Rajput rulers to join hands to oust the Ghaznavids from the Punjab. In fact, the Ghaznavids felt strong enough to make raids all the way to Ujjain.

Some also say that one of the weaknesses was because of the inter-social friction caused by the caste system that was beginning to degenerate into a matter of birth rite instead of qualification. Thus, Kshatriya warriors who were meant to show valor and heroism were only Kshatriyas by birth or inheritance and not by quality. In this way, the strength needed was not always available, except in such heroes as the Rajputs, or later with Shivaji and others. Furthermore, Brahmanas who deserved their status through study, scholarship, and spiritual activities, were given their position merely from their fathers. And regardless of how qualified a Shudra might be for other activities, they became relegated to menial labors, when in Vedic times they fulfilled numerous

services. Thus, society began to lose its Vedic culture, which lost its flexibility and provided the means to always renew itself. In this way, it gradually became weak, allowing for the influence of the invaders to take up power over its people for a long period of time.

However, what has become the modern caste system was only solidified after India lost power, not before. There was still much freedom amongst social standings before any strong invasions into India. Furthermore, we can see that countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and most of North Africa were engulfed by Islam despite the fact that they had no caste system, and also did not have a social arrangement which could withstand the new take over. Thus, everyone in those countries had to eventually bow to the new paradigm, whereas in India there were always those who resisted, and eventually the Vedic culture still stood dominant. It is because of this spirituality held in the Vedic traditions that has allowed India to renew itself from whatever past it has endured. It has re-bloomed when it appeared she was on the brink of collapse. It has the oldest culture in the world, which still lives on in its traditions, temples, villages, the Brahmanas, and all who participate. This is what we must preserve. And we must not make this spirituality as the excuse for not being strong enough to stand up to protect the Dharma.

In conclusion, the real weakness of India against the invaders was the lack of unity amongst the numerous kingdoms of India. Many of them were rather small at the time, and individual state administrations did not have the resources or funds to maintain large armies. And they did not have the idea of cooperating and uniting themselves against such invaders at the time. The larger kingdoms, such as the Shauhans, Chandellas, Chaulukyas, and others, were far superior to the Islamic invaders in regard to manpower and funds. But the Hindus did not mobilize such resources in a proper way to deal with the invaders. And one kingdom would not provide assistance to another soon enough. It was all too decentralized to make a united thrust of defense, which would have certainly sent the attacking Muslims scurrying back to their own countries. And the smaller armies of the Indian kingdoms could not withstand the solid phalanxes that the Muslims brought to do battle. The Muslims had been trained by a militarized state and could withstand long periods of war. They were like Kshatriyas, but fired up to do the will of Allah. Whereas the few professionally trained warriors in the smaller kingdoms of India could only last so long, no matter how heroic they were.

DO NOT MISS THE MESSAGE OF THE PAST

These are all lessons to be learned. There is always the need to recognize approaching danger over the horizon and act to prevent it before it actually arrives. These are but historic examples of why Indian Hindus must work in a pro-active manner for the self-protection of themselves and the Vedic culture. History has given so many lessons to indicate that when this does not take place, ruination can follow. And it has, as we will see as we go through some of these historical incidents of India's past. We should not be forgetful of this and be forced to learn these lessons again. How many chances will we have before we run out of opportunity and the means to protect ourselves and our traditions?

We must be ready to combat evil, *adharma*, and those forces who wish to destroy Dharma, with the strength to stop them. We should not suffer the onslaughts of evil silently or with tolerance. Nor should we philosophise it away with some kind of false sanctimoniousness as if we are getting some spiritual credit for allowing Dharma to slip away. This is one of the disadvantages of the majority of Hindus, they are very tolerant in most cases, and suffer the anguish of evil for long periods of time before finally getting the courage, or throwing away the patience to stand up for themselves and defend their position. The 1000 years of living under domination by the invading forces, or outsiders, sends a clear picture of the truth of what I have just said. Being from America, I can honestly say I know of few Americans, unless they are just so plain dull-headed that they are as good as being asleep at the wheel, who would allow such a situation to continue in their own lives. They would either live free, or die fighting for it. Anything else is but shear weakness, which is a completely dishonorable condition. And when Alexander once asked a Brahmana what they taught to inspire the Hindu warriors to live up to such a high degree of heroism, the Brahmana replied simply, "We teach our people to live with honor." Let us make sure we do not lose that honor.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Real Intention of the Islamic Invaders

There are those who try to negate or downplay the real intention of the Islamic invaders, or say that the damage they did, and the cruelty and savagery they displayed, was not that bad. However, some of the Muslim historians have left records, some of which are quite detailed, of the atrocities they committed in their day-to-day accounts of what happened in their numerous encounters with Hindus. These cannot be denied or argued about when we read them as they are. After studying these texts, Sita Ram Goel, in his book *The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India*, explains:

> The dominant theme in these accounts is of *mu'mins* (Muslims) martyred; of *kafirs* (Hindus infidels) dispatched to hell; of cities and citadels sacked; of citizens massacred; of Brahmins killed or forced to eat beef; of temples razed to the ground and mosques raised on their sites; of idols broken and their pieces taken to imperial headquarters for being trodden underfoot by the faithful on the steps of the main mosque; of booty captured and carried away on the elephants, camels, horses, bullock carts, on the backs of sheep and goats, and even on the heads of Hindu prisoners of war; of beautiful Hindu maidens presented to the sultans and distributed among Muslim generals and nobles; of Hindu men, women and children sold into slavery in markets all over the Islamic world; and of *kafirs* converted to the "true faith" at the point of the sword. The Muslim historians treat every war waged against the Hindus as a *jihad* as enjoined by the Prophet and the Pious Caliphs.
>
> In these Muslim accounts, we never notice any note of pity, or regret, or reflection over deeds of wanton cruelty and rapacity. On the contrary, the Muslim

> historians express extreme satisfaction and gleeful gratitude to Allah that the mission of the Prophet has been fulfilled, the light of Islam brought to an area of darkness, and idolatry wiped out. These historians go into raptures over the richness of the booty acquired for the service of the Islamic state, for distribution among the *mujahids* and the *ulama* and the Sufis, for the promotion of Islamic learning, and for securing the seats of Islamic power.

Later we will refer to some of these Islamic records to see what actually happened and understand a little of how the Islamic invasions into India was one of the bloodiest stories of world history. The hatred that Islam showed against the Vedic tradition was because of its monotheistic zeal against a religion which appeared to honor many gods. This also showed how little the Muslims understood of the Vedic philosophy, because it is also a most monotheistic religion when viewed as a means to honor the one Supreme Being in many forms and in multiplicity. The Vedic tradition has the greatest liberality and latitude for seeing God in all things and all beings than practically any other spiritual path in the world. Hinduism accepts that God is one without a second, but there are numerous manifestations of God, and so many representatives and teachers of God. You can honor and respect them all. However, if that is not understood, which does take some philosophical maturity, then the simple-minded will misinterpret it from the start, and come up with some other speculative conclusion.

With such an inaccurate notion, the Muslims came and more or less enforced the premise that if anyone did not believe in Allah only, they would kill them. On that basis, tens of millions of Hindus were slaughtered and tortured by Muslims, or even Christians. This torment by Muslims went on in other parts of the world as well. And this goes on to this day with India being the target of more terrorism than in any other part of the world, much of which goes unreported by the global media.

We can see the tolerance of Hinduism compared with the intolerance of Islam, at least in the history of India. Hinduism can usually live with other religions very peacefully because it accepts the sacredness that they have to offer. Hindus are open to new ideas and are ready to recognize the central truth within other religions. Only recently have they begun to act in groups to defend their traditions when threatened, sometimes too radically. But should that not be expected after the history they have endured, and when their culture is still being threatened by the

religions they have hosted in their country for so many years? Why cannot the tolerance, respect, and freedom they have shown to others that they have hosted in their country be returned to them? This should not be so difficult, except for those who are taught not to accept or respect others outside their clan.

On the other hand, in how many Islamic countries is there freedom of religion? How many allow open practice of other forms of spirituality? We can plainly see that many are those Islamic countries which make it most difficult if not impossible to observe anything but Islam. If Islam expands in India, once we understand how intolerant they have been, should we not ask how will the worship in Hindu temples be allowed to continue? How will there be unity or peace when a religion exists wherein radical participants simply do not want to tolerate, not to mention respect, other forms of spirituality? How can there be freedom of the press when many forms of expression must be stifled for fear of offending Muslims? The time may soon be approaching when in India the greatness of what Vedic culture has to offer must again be brought out so its profound nature can be more clearly recognized.

This must be given some reflection when it is practically a miracle that the Vedic traditions survived the brutal attacks of the Muslims for so many years. The Muslims recorded in their histories that they felt it was their duty to destroy temples and wipe out the worship of deities within them. They wrote of the glee of the genocide that they undertook when slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Hindus. Mahmoud Ghazni would recite a verse of the Koran each night after having killed hundreds of "infidel" Hindus. Firuz Shah Tughlaq was another who felt it was a display of his piety to order the executions of all the Hindu leaders and practitioners on the day of the Vedic festivals, and then destroy the temple and build a mosque in its place. But from where did they get this zeal? From Islam itself. There are many quotes within the Koran that will provide for such motivation on the ways to treat non-Muslims, if one wishes to study them.

The fact is that the Islamic invaders of India expected to dominate the people and control the land for themselves. After the first few Muslim invaders, their intentions were not to merely make raids into the country and then make a hasty retreat with whatever booty they could retrieve. And they brought huge armies to do so. The Muslim chronicles show that they gave no thought to the idea of one day returning to a home. No, they came to dominate.

In order to make India their new home, it must adopt Islam. Thus, Vedic culture would have to be destroyed, wiped out. For that

reason, the medieval Muslim rulers converted Hindus by force or killed them, destroyed temples and deities, built mosques in their place, insulted in every way any Vedic institution or Hindu sentiment. Mullahs and Sufis were known to ridicule every aspect of the Vedic tradition. But one word against Islam, one criticism by a Hindu and he could lose his life. The British were not that bad, even though they also came to exploit the resources of India.

The time while Hindus were under Muslim rulers was indeed a most dark period for them. The Muslim histories, such as the *Tarikh-i-Wassaf*, describe that blood flowed in torrents as the slaughter of Hindus increased for the sake of Islam. They took all the gold and silver they could, and all other forms of treasure and valuables, mostly from the temples which had been built up by the Hindus through their devotion to God. An uncountable number of beautiful maidens and children of both sexes were taken captive. In this way, the Islamic armies brought the country to ruin for the inhabitants, and sacked numerous cities. The deities in the temples were broken, and the fragments were often taken to Delhi to become pavement in the entrance way to the Jami Masjid mosque for the "faithful" to trample on them. This is what is described.

Some people may try to give credit to Islam for expanding art, gardens, architecture, and so on in India. But it is not like India did not already have a vast array of art forms, dance, music, architecture, gardens and landscaping, astronomy, mathematics, and much more that had been developed on its own, long before any invaders arrived. These had been developed ages before Islam ever entered the country. Islam may have had its artists and poets who provided some new thoughts. But if there is one thing that can be credited to Islam after it entered India is the brutality it showed to the natives, the harsh treatment toward the culture and temples, and the lack of unity and the great divisions that have taken place with the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh, as was patronized by the Congress Party. This would never have been necessary or even a creditable idea if not for Islam. This division and creation of these two countries really did not solve anything or provide what it had hoped to achieve. There is even more quarrel now than before, even after having tried to provide a separate country for the Muslims who had previously been part of India. These were Muslims whose families were previously, for the most part, a segment of Vedic culture, followers of Sanatana-dharma, who were converted to Islam, and mostly by force. Jinnah, the architect for devising the idea of a Pakistan, is himself a descendant of a Hindu by the name of Jinahbahai. Pakistan has still not been content with its territory and has always wanted more, specifically Kashmir. Muslims

in Bangaldesh have continued to persecute Hindus to the point where the Hindus had to flee into India. Many descriptions of this can be provided. So how has this helped? Looking back, many are those who now say that the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh was a big mistake. We should make sure we do not repeat these mistakes again.

Awareness of the history and the challenges that have been faced by India and its people should be a requisite for all Indians to better value its present position and the culture and traditions that have been fought for and preserved by the heroes and the common people of the past and present. To look at this a little more deeply, let us read the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Historical Episodes in India's History That Should Not be Forgotten

We should not think that early India was a place without wars or battles. Hindu princes and kings always had confrontations amongst themselves, fighting over kingdoms and resources. The difference was that they never targeted the Brahmanas or priests, never killed cows, or destroyed temples, or raped women. The ordinary civilians were also not unnecessarily troubled by battle. There were certain conventions and a code of honor that were followed. And battles took place mostly in open spaces away from the towns and cities. Even the early invaders into India were not interested in destroying its culture and society as the Muslims were.

Even though there are numerous stories that could be told about the challenges, the persecutions, attacks, and the heroics of various Indians in the country's history, here are but a few of some that are important. These show some of what the Hindu people of India went through in persevering for what we have today, and should point out to anyone why we should not take it lightly, cheaply, or undervalue the freedom we presently have to participate in the Vedic traditions that have survived after so much persecution, struggle, and hardship.

So following from the previous chapter on the early invasions of India, we now look over the attacks of the Muslims.

THE ATTACKS OF MAHMOUD GHAZNI

One of the most savage of all invaders was Mahmoud Ghazni (Muhammad of Ghazni). He had vowed to invade India every year in order to destroy the worship of deities, which is part of the Vedic tradition. He also wanted to kill the infidels, capture slaves, and collect

whatever he could of India's vast wealth. It was 1000 CE when he had defeated Raja Jaipal of the Shahiya dynasty in Kabul. This was the defense for India's northwest area. He collected 250,000 dinars as indemnity, but then attacked and plundered Bhatiya in 1004 CE. He stayed there for a few years with his mullahs to convert the Hindus, but then went on to capture Nagarkot (Kangra) in 1008. His booty was many thousands of coins and gold and silver, and many precious stones and embroidered cloth. Here he also kindled his appetite for slaughtered Hindus, worthy slaves, and portable wealth. In 1011 he went on to attack the undefended city of Thanesar, where he destroyed numerous temples and deities. The main deity was Chakra Swami which was taken back to Ghazni and there put on the street of the public square for the defilement under the feet of faithful Muslims.

According to the descriptions of the Islamic record *Tarikh-i-Yamini* of Utbi (Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Jabbaru'l-Utbi), Mahmoud's secretary, "The blood of the infidels flowed so copiously [at Thanesar] that the stream was discolored, notwithstanding its purity, and people were unable to drink from it. The Sultan returned with plunder which is impossible to count. Praise be to Allah for the honour he bestows on Islam and Muslims."

The Muslim historical record, *Kitabu'l-Yamini*, also by Utbi, relates that Mahmoud of Ghazni next raided the city of Nardin in the Punjab, a town with a history that goes back thousands of years. It is recorded: "After the Sultan had purified Hind from idolatry, and raised mosques therein, he determined to invade the capital of Hind to punish those who kept idols and would not acknowledge the unity of God… He marched with a large army in the year AH 404 (1013 CE) during a dark night…" Here it is completely contradictory in regard to "the unity of God." How is there any understanding of the unity of God when to Subuktigin there was only one God to live or kill for? He was so elementary in his thinking he could not see the unity of God in any other God but his own, or I should say his own limited and most basic understanding of God. But his ignorance continues when he cannot understand the vastness of time and how long ago the world had been created. The *Kitabu'l-Yamini* goes on to relate: "A stone was found there in the temple of the great Budda on which an inscription was written purporting that the temple had been founded 50,000 years ago. The Sultan was surprised at the ignorance of these people, because those who believe in the true faith [Islam] represent that only seven hundred years have elapsed since the creation of the world, and signs of resurrection are even now approaching. The Sultan asked his wise men the meaning of

this inscription and they all concurred in saying that it was false, and no faith was to be put in the evidence of a stone." Thus, their insurmountable ignorance kept them from understanding the profound nature and antiquity of what they were seeing, having been blinded by their own religious bias.

In 1013, Mahmoud set his sites on Nandana, the new capital of King Anandapal, of the Shahiya dynasty. Here the Hindus fought hard, but lost, which paved the way for the destruction of more temples, and the slaughter of innocent civilians. Utbi described that again the Sultan brought back immense booty, and so many slaves that they sold most cheaply. Even noble men of India became the slaves of common shopkeepers.

MAHMOUD GHAZNI'S ATTACK ON MATHURA

Now it was easy for Mahmoud to attack into the heart of India. Thus, in December of 1018, Mahmoud crossed the Yamuna River and collected 1,000,000 dirhams from Baran (Bulandshahar), and then marched into Mathura district, first into Mahaban. Utbi describes that many men tried to flee the fort and cross the foaming river, but many were drowned, slain, or captured. Almost 50,000 men were killed. Then Mahmoud directly attacked Mathura, the town sacred for Lord Krishna. He was quite impressed by the main Keshava Rai temple, the temple that marks the birth site of Lord Krishna, thinking that it must have taken 200 years to build. Nonetheless, he burned the huge temple to the ground. The pillage of the city went on for 20 days, in which Mahmoud gave instruction to destroy all of the temples. There he took five golden deities and 200 silver deities, leaving the city in ruins.

From there he went on to Kanauj, which had been the center of several dynasties of Hindus, which is also described in the *Kitabu'l-Yamini* of Utbi. Therein it explains the antiquity of the temples, in which it says: "In Kanauj there were nearly 10,000 temples, which the idolaters falsely and absurdly represented to have been founded by their ancestors two or three hundred thousand years ago…" Of course, the Muslim invaders could not understand such a span of time and continued with the destruction of all things non-Muslim. Seeing the destruction of so many temples and deities, many citizens fled, and those who did not were butchered. The soldiers were given free reign to plunder and take captives in whatever way they liked.

Munj was the next city to be attacked, where the Brahmanas fought to the last man, only after they had thrown their children and wives into the fire to prevent them from being taken as slaves, which would have been worse than death. The next town was Asi, where the ruler fled, and Mahmoud ordered the five forts to be demolished with the residents buried in the rubble, and all soldiers killed or captured. The city of Shrawa was the next to be attacked, where only after three days of slaughtering the infidels did the soldiers take time to search the bodies of the dead for any valuables, which amounted to huge amounts of gold, silver, rubies, and pearls. From this campaign he returned to Ghazni with 53,000 slaves, so many that it is written how the countries of Mawaraun-Nahr, Iraq, and Khurasan were filled with them in a common slavery of fair and dark, rich and poor.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SOMNATH

Mahmoud Ghazni also went to Somnath in 1026 where he destroyed the famous temple and took back much wealth, including the famous Shiva linga, some of the fragments of which were turned into the steps of the city's Jama Masjid mosque where the faithful could defile it by walking on it. Other fragments were sent to Mecca, Medina, and Baghdad for the same purpose. The Indians made a desperate attempt to defend their temple, but more than 50,000 were slain by the armies of Mahmoud. He also took away 20,000,000 dirhams of gold, silver, and gems from the temple. He then stripped the lingam of its guilded gold and then attacked it with his sword, breaking it into bits which he sent back to Ghazni to be laid into the steps of the new Jama Masjid mosque to be perpetually trampled on and defiled by the faithful Muslims who would regularly walk over them.

The historian Al-Biruni (973-1048) records the effects of Mahmoud Ghazni's campaigns in India. He says that he ruined the prosperity of the country and made dust of the Hindus which scattered in all directions. He was known for his barbarism and brutality against Hindus and their temples. There was a great relief when he died in 1030.

Mahmoud's son tried to do the same as his father, but only carried out one successful campaign, which was on Hansi in 1037. He attacked the fort, which was bravely defended by the Hindus, but, as recorded in the *Tarikh-us-Subuktigin*, the Brahmanas were all killed, and the women and children were all taken away as slaves, and the treasure was distributed amongst the army.

MUHAMMAD GHURI

It was in the last quarter of the 12th century when Muhammad Ghuri renewed the attacks on India. His idea was not merely to raid the areas, but to retain his conquests and then build his empire therein. When he engaged in the Battle of Tarain in 1191, he met with fierce opposition from Prithiviraj Chauhan who managed to get help from his fellow Rajput kings. Prithiviraj actually defeated and captured Muhammad Ghuri, but following the Rajput martial code, he released him. But Muhammad did not have the same respect, and returned with a larger army in 1192 and defeated and killed Prithiviraj, thus taking the kingdom of Delhi. Thereafter, he attacked Ajmer in 1192 after he had defeated Prithiviraj Chauhan. The Islamic record of Hasan Nizami, *Taj-ul-Ma*, describes that in Ajmer the Sultan destroyed all of the temples and built mosques in their places, along with colleges to teach the precepts of Islam.

The next year he attacked and defeated Jayachandra of Kanauj, which was followed by the usual slaughter of people, rape of women, and destruction of temples. Hasan Nizami rejoices in his records that during the attack of Asni and Varanasi (Benares) they destroyed 1000 temples and built mosques in their places. In Ibn Asir's *Kamil-ut-Tawarikh*, it says that the killing of Hindus was immense; none were spared except the women and children, and the carnage of men went on until the earth was weary. The women were taken as slaves and sold all over the Islamic world. The Buddhist temples at Sarnath were also destroyed and the Buddhist monks were killed.

THE SLAVE (MAMLUK) SULTANS

Qutbuddin Aibak, Ghuri's lieutenant, took up the cause and also attacked many cities. Aibak is also described by Hasan Nizami as suppressing a Hindu revolt at Kol (Aligarh) in 1193, after which he raised three bastions with the severed heads of the defending infidels, while piles of their carcasses became food for beasts of prey. He relates that the area was freed from any temples and deities, thus the foundations of the infidels were destroyed.

In Delhi in 1194, Aibak destroyed 27 Hindu temples and built the Quwwat-ul-Islam (Qutab Minar) mosque with their ruins. Aibak decorated it with the precious stones and gold obtained from the temples which were destroyed by the elephants, as described by Nizami. The

mosque was completed by his former Turkish slave, Iltutmish, who had killed Aibak's successor, Aram, in order to take the throne.

To defend themselves, the Mher tribe in Ajmer revolted against Aibak, assisted by the Chaulukyas of Gujarat. Aibak had to call for re-enforcements from Ghazni before he could return the attack. Then in 1196 he advanced on Anahilwar Patan, Gujarat's capital. Nizami records that after Raja Karan was defeated, 50,000 infidels were "sent to hell" by the sword, and 20,000 slaves, and more cattle than countable were possessed by the victors. The temples were all demolished and palaces sacked.

Back at Ajmer, Aibak destroyed the Sanskrit College of Visaladeva, and then laid the foundation of a mosque, which was later known as the *ADhai Din ka JhoMpaDa*. In 1202, Aibak's conquest of Kalinjar was his greatest achievement, where he converted temples into mosques and took away 50,000 men as slaves, so many that the plains became "black as pitch with Hindus," as described by Nizami.

Aibak claimed himself to be the new Sultan of Delhi when Ghuri was assassinated by the Gakkhars in 1206. Obviously, after all that fighting and conquering, Muhammad Ghuri was not left with much time to enjoy the spoils. Aibak established what is called the "Slave Dynasty" because he and some of his successors were slaves before they rose to such an elevated position. However, Aibak's rule only lasted four years, due to the glory of God, ending when he was killed in a polo accident.

Another accomplice at the time was Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji, who destroyed the undefended university town of Adantpuri in Bihar in 1200, butchering all of the Buddhist monks in their monasteries. He also suddenly attacked the town of Nadiya in 1202. In the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* of Badauni it is described that more property and booty was taken by the Muslims than could be calculated, and Bakhtyar destroyed all of the temples and founded mosques.

Nonetheless, by 1206 Kalinjar had been repossessed by the Hindu Chandellas, and Ranthambhor had disconnected itself from the Delhi Sultanate. Gwalior had been retaken by the Pratihars, the Doab was taken by the Gahadvad prince Harischandra, and the Katehar Rajputs had regained influence over the area beyond the Ganges. Plus, the Yadavbhatti Rajputs near Alwar had cut off the road to Ajmer. Aibak was unable to regain any of these territories before he died in 1210.

Aibak's son-in-law and successor, Shamsuddin Iltutmish (1210 – 1236), succeeded Aibak as the sultan by defeating Aibak's son. Thus, the principle of heredity, of son succeeding his father was checked at the outset. Iltutmish must be regarded as the real consolidator of the Turkish

conquests in north India. He invaded Malwa in 1234 and destroyed the ancient temple at Vidisha. Badauni also reports that he leveled to the ground the famous Mahakal Shiva temple in Ujjain, which had already been in existence for 600 years. He brought brass Vedic deities back to Delhi and placed them in the ground in front of the mosque doors so people would trample on them. He succeeded in retaking Ranthambhor and Gwalior, and the area around Ajmer. But he suffered several defeats by the Guhilots of Nagda, the Chauhans of Bundi, the Paramars of Malwa, and the Chandellas of Bundelkhand. He could also not shake the hold of the Katehar Rajputs. Even his grip around Ajmer started to slip away by the time he died in 1236.

During his last years, Iltutmish finally nominated his daughter Raziya (1236 - 1239) to the throne. Raziya was the first and only Muslim lady to sit on the Delhi throne. But in order to assert her claim, Raziya had to contend against her brothers as well as against powerful Turkish nobles, and could rule only for three years.

Though brief, her rule had a number of interesting features, like the beginning of the struggle for power between the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs, sometimes called as the forty or Chahalgami. She sent an expedition against Ranthambhor to control the Rajputs, and successfully established law and order in the length and breadth of her kingdom. In 1239, an internal rebellion broke out in which Raziya was imprisoned and killed by bandits.

Hereafter, Muslim power declined as Hindu strength began to be revived, especially by the Katehar Rajputs who had not submitted to Islamic imperialism. The Muslim Balban had to engage in a fierce battle, crossing the Ganges in 1254, and in Katehar he cruelly killed every male, even down to eight years old, and captured all of the women. Nonetheless, Islamic power still declined until it was reinforced by the Khaljis in 1290.

The Sultanate of Delhi was held by five separate dynasties, beginning with the Slave Dynasty (1206-1290), the Khaljis (1290-1320), the Tughluqs (1320-1414), the Sayyids (1414-1451), and the Lodis (1451-1526). There were 34 Sultans who sat on the Delhi throne in a little over three centuries.

Over all, there were seven other sultanates in India, namely the Gujarat (1407-1526), Khandesh (1370-1510), the two dynasties of Malwa (1401-1531), Jaunpur (1394-1479), the four dynasties of Bengal (1282-1533), Multan (1444-1525), and the Bahmani Sultanate of the Deccan (1347-1482). However, there were several Hindu kingdoms that were also greatly influential, which included the Vijayanagar kingdom

(1336-1565), Mewar (1314-1528), Marwar, Mithila, Orissa, and Assam which were never completely subjugated by the Muslims during this time, nor were the Hindu kingdoms of the deep south, except for when the Khaljis gained some influence.

THE KHALJIS

The Khaljis were next to take up the cause of slaughtering Hindus and destroying temples. Jalaluddin Khalji, in 1291, destroyed many Vedic temples in Jhain while leading an expedition to Ranthambhor. As in the usual Islamic custom, they sent numerous broken Vedic deities back to the gates at the Jama Masjid in Delhi so people could walk on them. His nephew, Alauddin, also attacked Vidisha in 1292 and brought back much booty along with the main deity, and threw it in front of the Badaun gate to be trampled on by the people. In 1295, he also took his war to Devagiri, the heart of the Yadava kingdom, where he demolished and looted all the temples therein.

Alauddin became Sultan in 1296, but only after murdering his uncle and father-in-law, Jalaluddin, as well as all of his supporters. Thereafter, he also killed all of his own cousins and anyone who could lay a claim to the throne. In 1297, he invaded Gujarat and destroyed the ancient Surya temples at Mehsana and subjugated the Hindus of the land with much slaughter. The Raja of Gujarat fled to Devagiri and the Hindu kings tried to fight back under Shankara Yadava. In 1298, he arranged an expedition under his generals, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan. They defeated the Gujarat king and plundered the ports of Surat and Cambay. They also captured and castrated a Hindu youth whose name was Maliq Kaffur and presented him to Alauddin, who took him as his lover.

In 1298, Alauddin's general again attacked the Somnath temples and took away much of the wealth. Again the deities in the temples were taken to Delhi where they were placed where they would be trodden upon by the Muslims.

Thereafter, Ulugh Khan was sent to quell the Hindu resistance in Gujarat. He conquered the fort of Junagad and demolished all the temples in the surrounding regions. They also went on to Somnath, where they again destroyed the temple, which had been rebuilt by the Hindus, and took the deity back to Delhi for being trampled upon by the Muslims. Fire and sword was applied to the whole area and all Hindus were slaughtered. Even Kamala Devi, the queen of Gujarat, as well as the

royal treasury, were taken back to Delhi where she was added to Alauddin's harem.

Jalaluddin Khalji was not able to recapture any land lost by the previous reign of Muslims. Though his generals, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan who conquered Gujarat in 1298, were beaten back from Ranthambhor. Then in 1301, Alauddin returned with his entire force to sack Ranthambhor. He succeeded and slew Hammira Deva. He then conducted a massive temple demolition operation destroying all the temples of Jhain and Sawai Madhopur and killed all of the inhabitants.

In 1303, the city of Chittor alone had held out against the Muslims. It attracted Khalji's attention due to its beautiful queen Padmini. Khalji sacked and burned Chittor after slaying Rana Rattan Singh. Nonetheless, Khalji was deprived of having the queen since she lead all the women in the fort to *jauhar*, jumping into the sacrificial fire to their deaths. However, Alauddin's conquest of Chittor did not last long, and the Sisodias retook it shortly after his death in 1316. The same can be said of his conquest of Jalor in Rajasthan.

In 1304, he also had launched a *jihad* on Ujjain, the ancient center of Indian learning and destroyed it completely. Chanderi was attacked next by Alauddin and the ancient temples were demolished. In this way, he took his destruction toward Hindus and their temples as far as he could.

Other invasions into Devagiri in Maharasthra, Warangal in Andhra Pradesh, Dvarasamudra in Karnataka, and Madurai in Tamil Nadu were all short-lived victories because the Hindu princes claimed their independence soon after the invaders left. In fact, the Khalji Empire itself failed as soon as Alauddin died in 1316.

Thereafter, the amazing intrigue amongst the ranks continued when Alauddin's lover, Maliq Kaffur, killed all the members of the Khalji tribe except for Qutbuddin Mubarak, Alauddin's last son, and ruled in his name. Kaffur was murdered by the Turkish chiefs of the Southern Alliance and Mubarak ascended the throne. In 1318, Qutbuddin Mubarak invaded Devagiri again as its ruler, Haripala Deva, had cast off the Muslim yoke. Haripala faced a massive defeat and was captured. He was savagely skinned alive and his head and skin were placed on display at the entrance to the Devagiri fort. Thus ended the Yadava dynasty and Hindu sovereignty in Maharashtra. Then Mubarak's lover, Khusru, murdered him and made himself Sultan. Amir Qazaghan of the Qara'Unas tribe, from Konduz, became the lord of the Southern Alliance and sent his commander, al Ghazi al Maliq Tughlaq, to seize the throne of Delhi after murdering Khusru.

To save Gujarat from being taken over again by the Hindus, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq had to step in during 1320. He was successful in conquering south and east Bengal, but after that many of his raids, along with his son's, had varying affects, some of which were not fixed or victorious.

WARNING SIGNS OF TYRANNY

In the early part of Alauddin's reign he had so many rebellions to deal with that he made a plan to reduce any potential of a rebellion by completely dominating the people. These are indeed a few of the warning signs of complete tyranny, of which people should make sure they avoid at all costs. Thus, when you see any such signs in the rulership of the country, it is then time to immediately take action.

Thus, Aluaddin first removed all of the supporters of the previous ruler, or Sultan, including all men, women, and children. He then established a system of spies to be informed about everything the people did. He figured that all rebellions and conspiracies started in meetings, especially when the talks of politics followed cups of wine. Because of this, he banned all public meetings of the elite, and all drinking and forms of intoxicants. Next, he concluded that people could not start a rebellion unless they had the funds to do so. Thus, he made sure that people had no chance to accumulate wealth. As the contemporary historian Zia-uddin Barani explained: "Whenever a village was held by proprietary right, in free gift, or as a religious endowment, it was to be brought back into the exchequer by a stroke of the pen. The people were pressed and money was exacted from them on every kind of pretext. All pensions, grants of land, and endowments were appropriated. The people became so absorbed in trying to keep themselves alive that rebellion was never mentioned… The Hindu was to be so reduced as to be unable to keep a horse, wear fine clothes, to enjoy any of life's luxuries. No Hindu could hold up his head and in their houses no sign of gold or silver or any superfluity was to be seen. These things, which nourish insubordination, were not to be found."

THE SACKING OF CHIDAMBARAM AND SRI RANGAM

Another result of the Khalji dynasty happened when the generals of Alauddin, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, invaded Gujarat in 1298.

Malik Kaffur, the young Hindu who Nusrat Khan had captured or bought for a thousand *dinars* and forcibly converted to Islam, was presented to the emperor at Delhi. Alaudin took and appreciated Kaffur who worked his way up to be the highest officer of the empire, as Malik Naib.

The Chola dynasty in the south continued to build temples, regardless of the situation. The temple sites may have been fewer and resources were reduced, but such classic examples as the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram was established nonetheless.

Then in 1310-1311, Malik Naib lead a large expedition into South India. The Hoysala king, Devarasamudra was frightened into surrender. However, the Pandya prince of Madurai would not be intimidated either to surrender or to fight. In fact, his hit and run methods tired Malik Naib, but Malik Naib took his frustration out on the citizens of the town. Thus, at Chidambaram (old Brahmastapur) he massacred the people, and destroyed the golden temple right to its foundations. After that he sacked the temples of Sri Rangam and the area of Kannanur. Even at Madurai, he burned the temple of Sokkanatha, though he had to retreat because of the defensive measures of the Hindus. However, he still took an immense booty with him and a huge number of prisoners which he sold into slavery along the way to the headquarters at Delhi.

THE TUGHLAQS

Though Muslim power lost ground after Alauddin's death in 1316, the Tughlaqs revived it. Alauddin suffered greatly in the last three years of his life from bad health and disappointing family matters. But at the time, only Rajasthan and Orissa had remained independent of Islamic rule, yet over the rest of the Islamic territory, most of the temples had been left destroyed and much of the Hindu population had been greatly reduced. So it was time to take up the sword again and begin the plunder and destruction of whatever Vedic culture remained. Among the Tughlaqs, Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325-1351) and Firuoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388) were the most important.

Muhammad worked to bring the regions of Orissa and Warangal back under the control of Delhi. He also went on several expeditions himself into the Deccan after he attained the position of sultan. The first one was to stifle a rebellion led by his own sister's son, Bahauddin Gurshasp, and the Hindu rulers of Dvarasamudra of the Hoysala dynasty and Kampili, or modern Bellary, Raichur, and Dharwar, who gave shelter to Gurshasp. However, when the sultan caught up with his rebellious

nephew, he ordered Gurshasp's flesh to be cooked with rice and given to the elephants. But his skin was to be stuffed and then put on display in all the main cities of the sultanate. When the governor of Multan refused to put the skin up for view, he was also quickly executed.

After annexing the area of Kampili to the empire, many of the elite were taken to Delhi where they were converted to Islam. However, amongst them were two young brothers, Harihara and Bukka who, many years later, were sent to the south as governors. But they reconverted back to their Vedic roots and as Hindus became the founders of the great Vijayanagar Empire in 1336. This also shows how shallow most of these forced conversions to Islam were, and how many of the people at that time would have easily converted back to Sanatana-dharma if given half a chance.

The Vijayanagar Empire was strong and solid, stretching from the Malabar coast to the Coromandel shores, and lasted two centuries from 1336 until its defeat in 1565. An alliance of four Bahmani kingdoms attacked it together and brought it down. It was a strong barrier against the Islamization of the south, and it built numerous temples and preserved the Vedic heritage.

THE PLUNDER OF JAGANNATHA PURI

Firoz Shah followed Islamic views to the letter, and was particularly cruel towards Hindus and Shia Muslims and even liberal Sunnis. It was in 1360 when Firoz Shah Tughlaq led an expedition into Orissa where he targeted and plundered the temple at Jagannatha Puri and destroyed many other Vedic temples and shrines. He wrote in his *Sirat-i-Firuz Shahi* that he destroyed the ancient shrine on the sea coast and ordered the image of Jagannatha to be perforated and disgraced by casting it down to the ground. They dug out other images that had been worshiped and did the same to them so they could be laid out in front of the mosques along the path of the Sunnis so they might trample the images as they walked to and from the mosques.

After the attack on Jagannatha Puri, Firuz Shah Tughlaq purposefully attacked an island off the coast for no other reason than to kill the 100,000 men who had taken shelter there to escape the tyrannical actions of Firuz. The *Sirat-i-Firuz Shahi* records his expedition with the following words: "Nearly 100,000 men of Jajnagar had taken refuge with their women, children, kinsmen, and relations. The swordsmen of Islam turned the island into a basin of blood by the massacre of the unbelievers.

Women with babies and pregnant ladies were haltered, manacled, fettered, and enchained, and pressed as slaves into service in the house of every soldier."

Back in Delhi, as it is recorded in the *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* (from *Insha-i-Mahry* by Amud Din Abdullah bin Mahru): "A report was brought to the Sultan that there was in Delhi an old Brahmana who persisted in publicly performing the worship of idols in his house and that people of the city, both Muslims and Hindus, used to resort to his house to worship the idol. The Brahmana had constructed a wooden tablet which was covered within and without with paintings of demons and other objects. An order was accordingly given to the Brahmana and was brought before the Sultan. The true faith [Islam] was declared to the Brahmana and the right course pointed out, but he refused to accept it. A pile was risen on which the kaffir with his hands and legs tied was thrown into and the wooden tablet on the top. The pile was lit at two places, his head and his feet. The fire first reached him in the feet and drew from him a cry and then fire completely enveloped him. Behold Sultan for his strict adherence to law and rectitude." Thus, Firoz Tughlaq burnt the old Hindu Brahmana alive.

Later, Firoz Shah Tughlaq went back up north and destroyed the sacred shrine of Jvalamukhi at Kangra (Nagarkot). There he took the main deity and sent it to Medina, while he took other images and mixed them with cows blood to be hung in nosebags from the necks of the Brahmanas.

INVASION OF KATHMANDU

Meanwhile, around the same time, Ilyas Shah of Bengal (1339-1379) also invaded Nepal and destroyed the Svayambhunath Buddhist temple in Kathmandu. From Bengal, he also traveled south and invaded Orissa where he destroyed numerous temples and sacked many places.

MUZAFFAR SHAH'S ATTACK ON SOMNATH

When the Muslims of Gujarat in 1391 complained to Nasiruddin Muhammad, the Tughlaq Sultan of Delhi, that the local governor, Farhat-ul-Mulk, was showing tolerance towards Hindus, he appointed Muzaffar Khan as the new governor. However, in 1392, after the death of the Delhi Sultan, he became independent and became Muzaffar Shah. The

following year he took an army to Somnath and ruined the temple which the Hindus had rebuilt. Many Hindus were killed in the process, and he constructed a mosque in its place.

The Hindus, however, soon began to restore the temple. But in 1401 Muzaffar returned with a huge army and again slaughtered numerous Hindus, demolished the temple, and built another mosque in its place.

Ahmad Shah, Muzaffar's grandson, succeeded him in 1411. It was only three years after that when he arranged through a special *darogah* to destroy all Hindu temples throughout Gujarat. Then Ahmad invaded the town of Sidhapur in 1415 and destroyed the images of Rudramahalaya, made the temple into a mosque, and renamed the town as Sayyadpur. The cruelty toward Hindus never let up.

AMIR TIMUR

Timur (known as Timur-I-lang, and Tamerlane) was a ruler of a vast empire, from Afghanistan, Persia, northern Iraq, Syria, and Asia Minor. Then, at the age of 65, he decided to invade India in 1398-99. He invaded because he felt the Muslim sultans were showing excessive tolerance to their Hindu subjects, which needed to be corrected. In his *Tuzuk-i-Timuri* he states his reasoning quite clearly: "O Prophet, make war upon the infidels and unbelievers, and treat them severely… My great object in invading Hindustan had been to wage a religious war against the infidel Hindus [and] the army of Islam might gain something by plundering the wealth and valuables of the Hindus." This shows how shallow his thinking was, that for blood and wealth he wanted to invade India, thinking this would gain him a place in paradise.

On his way into India, he first stopped at the fort of Kator, on the edge of Kashmir. His soldiers were ordered to kill all the men, capture all of the women and children, and waste all of their property. He then told them to build towers on the mountain of skulls of all the unbelievers who had been killed.

He then moved forward to Bhatnir. After fighting with the Rajputs, they soon surrendered and were pardoned. But Timur, according to Islam, was not bound to keep his word to infidels, so he quickly had his soldiers put to sword all the people in the fort, and in one hour the heads of 10,000 infidels were cut off. They then set fire to the fort and houses, and razed everything to the ground.

After this, the Hindu people of the city of Sarsuti, the region of Haryana, and then the town of Loni, and every village in between, met with the slaughtering sword. Women and children were taken as prisoners. Everyone they met was killed, except for a few Muslims who were kept separate.

Timor had by now captured up to 100,000 prisoners, mostly women and children. And now he was preparing to cross the Yamuna and go into Delhi to wage war against the Tughlaq army. However, his advisors said that this great number of prisoners should not be left with the baggage, but also idolaters and infidels could not be set free. So, what to do? Thus, Timur ordered that they should all be made food for the sword. Every soldier who had prisoners must put them to death, and anyone who failed to do so would also be executed and his property given to the informer. Thus, 100,000 Hindus were killed in one day.

Timur defeated the Tughlaq army the next day. He also heard that a number of Hindus were entering Delhi with their wives and goods. As further described in his *Tuzuk-i-Timuri*, he ordered his soldiers to seize these Hindus and their property. Many Hindus took up swords to resist, and the flames of anger quickly spread throughout the whole city. The Hindus set fire to their own houses, burned their wives and children in them, as opposed to allowing them being taken away as slaves, and then rushed into battle where they were killed. Timur described that through Thursday, Friday, and Saturday his 15,000 Turk soldiers did nothing but kill and plunder, each gathering from 20 to 100 prisoners of men, women, and children. The booty was so immense that it could not be counted. Except for the Muslim quarters, the whole city was sacked.

When one of his soldiers was beaten to death for raping a Hindu lady in the city of Meerut, he attacked and killed 300,000 of the population. The trails of Hindu carnage, particularly in Panipat and Delhi during only three months (September to December) were so devastating that it took Delhi 100 years to rebuild. Thus, everywhere Timur went he left a trail of blood, torture, conversion or mass killings, and enslavement. This was far more beastly and savage than even Mahmoud Ghazni.

THE SAYYIDS

By this time the country was divided into several sultanates, of which the major ones included Gujarat, Bengal, Malwa, Khandesh, Jaunpur, the Deccan with the Bhamanis, and Vijayanagar. They were not

known for anything too distinguishing, but started with Khizr Khan (1414-1421), Mubarak Shah (1421-1434), Muhammad Shah (1434-1445), and Alauddin Alam Shah (1445-1451), who was hanging on to decreasing regions. Things calmed down a little with the Sayyids since they were not intolerant of the Hindus, as neither were the Lodis. That does not mean, however, that things were great.

THE LODIS

The Lodis started with Buhlul Lodi (1451-1489), which marked the dominance of an Afghan tribal (Pathan) family over the Turks, who they hated. He restored the authority of Delhi's sultanate for Jaunpur, the Doab, Malwa, and Rajasthan. Buhlul's son and successor, Nizam Khan, took the title of Sikandar Shah (1489-1517), and had control of Delhi, the Punjab, and the Doab. However, Sikandar Lodi was not able to continue to subdue Gwalior, Rajasthan, or Baghelkhand. He planned to attack Malwa and Rajasthan, but to no avail.

The last of the Lodi rulers was Ibrahim (1517-1526) who was known for being a weak and deficient leader. The end came when Ibrahim's uncle, Alam Khan, went to Babar, the Mughal ruler of Kabul, and asked him to attack India and remove Ibrahim to raise their authority. Babar had his own interest at heart. When he did attack India, and engaged in the First Battle of Panipat in April 20, 1526, he encountered Ibrahim's forces of 100,000 against his army of 10,000 and trounced them. He killed Ibrahim in the process and established the Moghul power in India.

SIKANDAR LODI'S TREATMENT OF MATHURA

Though Sikandar was the son of a Pathan father, his mother was the daughter of Hindu goldsmith of Sirhand. Nonetheless, he seemed to have hated Hindus. Once, according to the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* of Abdullah, written during the reign of Jahangir, when a huge assembly of Hindus had gathered at Kurkhet, he desired to go to Thanesar to kill them all. Later, he made it a point to go to the Hindu holy places and destroy numerous places of worship leaving nothing left of them. Mathura was one such place where he ruined numerous temples and took the deities and gave them to the butchers to use as weights. All Hindus were forbidden to shave their heads or beards or bathe at the *ghats* along the

Yamuna River. He repeated the ruination of many holy places in other parts of India as well.

DWARKA DESTROYED BY MUHAMMAD BEGRHA

It was also about this time of 1458 that Mahmoud of Begrha became the Sultan of Gujarat. He was known for being the worst Muslim fanatic of that dynasty. He admitted that when invading different areas, he was more interested in the spread of Islam than in collecting money. In 1469, he invaded Junagadh, which then became known as Mustafabad. Then, in 1472, he attacked Dwarka and the temples and sacked the city.

Begrha also went to Champaner where he killed Raja Jayasingh and his minister in cold blood for not converting to Islam, and renamed the city Mahmudabad.

THE MUGHALS

The Mughals lasted from 1526 to 1857 with its founding by Babar, a descendant of the notorious Tamerlane. It was a period when the Indian traditions were amalgamated with the Turko-Iranian culture. The Mughal rulers of India kept close contacts with Iran and there was a stream of scholars and artists coming over the frontiers to seek fame and fortune at the brilliant court of the Great Mughal, Babar.

Babar (1526-1530) may have been known for his appreciation of the arts, but there was a much darker side to him, as he describes in his *Tuzuk-i-Baburi*. He was the first king to bring artillery to India, which was new to the Indian army. He describes the numerous massacres of the infidels and how he would watch as his swordsmen would cut off the heads of the Hindus and build taller and taller mounds of their skulls after the battles in which he had fought with them. It is described that once the ground became so drenched with flowing blood and filled with quivering carcasses that his tent from which he watched the slaughter had to be moved three times to higher ground. He used every possibility for capturing prisoners and slaves, and acquiring wealth from his attacks. It was important that every king in his dynasty appear as a slayer of infidels. Thus, he destroyed temples and smashed deities whenever the opportunity allowed.

In his *Rag Asa Guru Nanak Dev*, Guru Nanak himself describes Babur's atrocities on Hindus from what he had witnessed first hand. He says, "Having attacked Khuraasaan, Babar terrified Hindustan. The Creator Himself does not take the blame, but has sent the Mughal as the messenger of death. There was so much slaughter that the people screamed, Didn't You feel compassion, Lord?" (pg 360)

"On the condition of Hindu women in Babur's monstrous rule: Those heads adorned with braided hair, with their parts painted with vermillion - those heads were shaved with scissors, and their throats were choked with dust. They lived in palatial mansions, but now, they cannot even sit near the palaces.... ropes were put around their necks, and their strings of pearls were broken. Their wealth and youthful beauty, which gave them so much pleasure, have now become their enemies. The order was given to the soldiers, who dishonored them, and carried them away. If it is pleasing to God's will, He bestows greatness; if it pleases His will, He bestows punishment." (pp 417-18)

By the time he died, Babar had acquired Delhi, the Punjab, and the Ganga plains to Bihar.

Humayun (1530-1556) was next in line and inherited the kingdom, but with an empty treasury. However, the Afghan Sher Shah, who had Bihar and Bengal, gave him much threat and defeated him in battle in Kannauj in 1540. Thereafter, Sher Shah became the emperor of Delhi, and Humayun had to pass the next twelve years in exile until Sher Shah's death, when he regained the throne from Sher Shah's weak successor.

Sher Shah was not one to persecute Hindus in general. But, as recorded by Shaykh Nurul Haq in his chronicle *Zubdat-ul-Tawarikh*, in 1543 in Raisen, he decided to attack the fort. The fort had been occupied by Puranmal, who had a harem of 1000 women, several of whom were Muslims who Puranmal made to dance for him. Sher Shah was indignant over this. So, after conquering the fort, it was agreed that Puranmal, his family and children, and 4000 Rajputs could leave the fort without challenge. But then several Muslim men contested it, giving their opinion that Islamic law says that such infidels can not go unslain. Thus, Sher Shah's whole army surrounded Puranmal and his army. After the Rajputs killed their own women and children, to prevent them from being taken as slaves, they counterattacked and fought to the death of the last man.

Akbar, Humayun's son, succeeded him in 1556 at the age of only thirteen, and ruled to 1605. He consolidated the region into a strong empire. It was also under him that Indian music was adopted as a whole and with enthusiasm. Literature and poetry were also encouraged.

Though many words have been generated to advocate Akbar's greatness, what is often not discussed and should not be forgotten is the side of him as a Ghazi, a slayer of infidels or Hindus. His first conflict was at the Second Battle of Panipat. There, after the fighting, the half-dead and unconscious Hemu, the general of Adil Shah, under whom the Afghan resistance had regrouped, was brought before him. Hemu was the only Hindu King who ever ruled the Delhi throne in Indian history. When Akbar saw Hemu, he brought his sword down on Hemu's neck, and under Bairam Khan in the presence of Akbar, other Muslim warriors also drove their swords into the bleeding body of Hemu. Hemu's head was sent to Kabul, and his body was gibbeted at one of the gates at Delhi. Akbar then reoccupied Delhi and Agra.

Abul Fazl records in his chronicle, *Akbar-Nama*, that in 1568 Akbar ordered the massacre at Chittorgarh after the fort had been taken. Even though Alauddin Khalji had previously taken the fort after a siege of six months, he did not order a slaughter of the peasants of the area. But Akbar re-interpreted the acts of serving the army and watching the battle among the peasants as being the same as assisting in the battle. Thus, all peasants needed to be slain. There were 8,000 Rajput warriors in the fort and 40,000 peasants. From early dawn to midday, the Muslim swords killed nearly 30,000 people. After this, Akbar went to Ajmer where he gave thanks to Allah and the Prophet, along with his patron saint, Muinuddin Chishti, and had a reading of many verses from the Koran to show that he was faithfully following the example of the Prophet.

After a victorious battle at Ahmedabad, he built a pyramid of the heads of the killed rebels, which was more than 2000 in number. This was a practice common among his ancestors. One incident at this time was that Akbar saw an unfortunate lamplighter coiled up near his couch, after which he ordered the servant to be shredded into a thousand pieces.

Akbar was also known to have accumulated a large harem of Hindu women, kidnapped and taken by force, and then treated no better than prostitutes. In Vincent Smith's book on Akbar (p.81) he refers to a Jesuit Father's testimony that Akbar was a hard drinker and criticized his licentious relations with women. In fact, boys also prostituted themselves in his kingdom. Babur, Akbar's grandfather, had written a lengthy description of a sodomic infatuation for a male sweetheart he had. Humayan was known for similar relations, which was prevalent during the Moghul rule in India. These are hardly things for which Akbar would be hailed as a righteous and noble ruler.

The *Ain-i-Akbari* as recorded by Abul Fazl mentions that Husain Khan, Akbar's governor at Lahore, ordered the Hindus as unbelievers to wear a patch near the shoulders to show them as "unbelievers" and pariahs of society. Thus, they got the name of *tukriya* or "patcher".

Due to Akbar's inefficient administration capacity, when pestilence or famine took place, it often lasted for years. Regarding the great famine in Gujarat, Dr. Shrivastava in his book on Akbar (*Akbar the Great*, p.169) explains "the famine was not caused by drought or the failure of seasonal rains, but was due to the destruction wrought by prolonged wars and rebellions, constant marching and counter-marching of troops, and killing men on a large scale, and the breakdown of administrative machinery and the economic system… the mortality rate was so high that on an average 100 cart-loads of dead bodies were taken out for burial in the city of Ahmedabad alone…" Akbar is said to have done next to nothing to remedy the suffering of the masses.

Akbar is also said to have built several forts and palaces of grandeur. But with constant famines, wars, and revolts to contend with, where did he get the time and money to build them? However, from records we can see that Akbar simply renamed pre-existing buildings or townships and claimed them as his own. An example of this is the famous town of Fatehpur Sikri, which was known to have been an ancient principality before its occupation by the Muslims, who were known more for raiding what belonged to others than to arrange mighty teams of engineers and architects to construct magnificent buildings. In the commentaries of Monserrate, a contemporary of Akbar, he reveals the truth of this. He states that the Muslims destroyed many Hindu temples and built mosques in their place, or even usurped many Hindu buildings and then made them into tombs and shrines for wicked and worthless Muslim men to be worshiped as though they were saints.

Akbar also took control of a major part of Rajasthan, but the great Rajput hero Rana Pratap and his son, Amar Singh, resisted. Rana never yielded an inch that might compromise his freedom. Akbar sent a huge army with elephants and artillery led by Man Singh, his brave Hindu general. Rana Pratap had prepared for this by assembling a defense that would match his enemy's. The battle of Haldighati on June 21, 1576, is when the forces met. Rana even had a personal confrontation with Man Singh, who barely missed being hit by a javelin thrown by Rana. It was at that time when Chetak, Rana's war horse of many battles, was injured and died, but not before carrying Rana to safety. Rana removed his men from battle with a loss of around 200 men and no prisoners taken. He may have not defeated his enemy, but he lived to

continue the harassment of Akbar and his troops until his accidental death on January 29, 1597, when he had regained most of his territories except Chittorgarh. To this day he is viewed as a hero, and was the inspiration for many warriors and freedom fighters.

Akbar later built the Ibadat-Khana or Hall of Prayer in 1575. At first it was open only to the Sunnis, but in 1578 he opened it to all people, regardless of creed in an effort to convert them to Islam. Akbar never created a new religion but suggested a new religious path based on the common truths of all religions, which continued to place Islam in the highest position. Later, he also accepted the idea that a ruler was the guardian of his subjects and worked for the welfare of the citizens, irrespective of their sect or creed. It is because of these few factors and his endeavors to convince people he was a generous and tolerant tyrant, that he has been called one of the great and liberal rulers of India by those less knowledgeable of his real actions. Claims of Akbar's greatness were produced mostly from the fabricated stories by Muslim chroniclers seeking self-aggrandizement and the winning of Akbar's favors. Otherwise, they are mostly tall tales which are but lies still believed and noted in history books to this day.

Salim, Akbar's son, succeeded him after his death and came to be known as **Jahangir**. Jahangir gained control over Bengal and Mewar after four campaigns against Amar Singh. Nonetheless, the Mughals became vulnerable to attacks from Central and Western Asia, and Jahangir himself had to deal with the rebellion of his own son, Shah Jahan, toward the end of his reign. Furthermore, it was also at that time, in 1600, when the East India Company established itself in India, which would gradually change everything.

We find it described in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* that in the beginning of his rule Jahangir followed the humanistic rule of his father Akbar the great – the policy of *sulehkul*, and even issued a proclamation against the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam. However, he revoked Akbar's orders that those who had been forcibly converted from Islam could return to Hinduism. He also severely punished those who showed an inclination toward Hinduism, such as Kaukab, Sharif, and Abdul Latif. He also prohibited the free inter-marriage customs between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. Hindus marrying Muslim girls and those who had already married were given a choice between Islam and death. Many were killed.

Jahangir was also known as a drunkard and a sadist. He cared more for women than Islam. However, he encouraged conversions to Islam by providing financial care to converts. But his hatred for Vedic

culture and Hindus is clearly shown even in the first year of his reign when he had the Sikh Guru Arjun Dev tortured to death. How this happened is that Jahangir's own son, Prince Khusrav, rebelled against him. Jahangir went out with imperial forces after him. So the prince then went to Guru Arjun for assistance, since he had met him before at his grandfather Akbar's court. Guru Arjun gave him some money for his travel. Then a furious Jahangir captured Guru Arjun and fined him 200,000 rupees, and also ordered him to strike out some of the verses in the Sikh holy book, the *Granth*. The guru refused, whereupon Jahangir ordered his sons arrested and all his assets confiscated. He was then charged with treason and ordered to be put to death.

This is related in his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. Therein he describes that Arjun had developed many followers and how he wanted to put an end to this falsehood, or bring him into Islam. Thus, Guru Arjun Dev ji nominated Har Govind as the next guru and went to Lahore where he was imprisoned at Lahore fort. Jahangir left the arrangements of torture to Shaik Farid Bukhari who had gained the title of Murtaza Khan. Guru Arjun Dev ji was chained to a post in an open place exposed to the sun from morning to evening in the summer months of May to June. Below his feet a heap of sand was put which burnt like a furnace. Boiling water was poured on his naked body at intervals. Some reports also say that he was made to sit on a hot iron plate, and was boiled in a cauldron. He was also stoned, which caused blood oozing sores on his head. His body was covered with blisters all over. In this agony Guru used to utter: Tera Kiya Metha lage, naam padarath Nanak mange (Whatever You ordain appears sweet. I supplicate for the gift of [the Lord's] name).

The Guru was finally ordered to be executed, at which time his hands and feet were tied and he was thrown into the Ravi River where he disappeared. In regard to the huge fine of two lakhs of rupees imposed on him, some historians say that, as a measure of clemency at the intervention of Mian Mir, this fine was imposed in lieu of the sentence of death. The Sikhs offered to pay the fine themselves but the Guru forbade them to do so. He replied to the Emperor, "Whatever money I have is for the poor, the friendless and the stranger. If thou ask for money thou mayest take what I have; but if thou ask for it by way of fine, I shall not give thee even a Kaurz (penny)." The Guru accepted death by torture. This event changed the whole attitude of the Sikh population toward the Mughal rulers. They were now angry, and with the next Sikh guru, Har Govind (1606-1644) they transformed to a militant state.

Furthermore, Jahangir destroyed the Bhagwat temple in Ajmer, persecuted Jains in Gujarat, ordered Jain monks not to be seen or be put

to death, and sent Murtaza Khan to the temple town of Kangra in northern India to destroy the temples. The attack lasted 20 months, after which Jahangir went there to slaughter cows and spill their blood at what used to be Vedic holy places, and to build a mosque.

Shah Jahan reigned from 1628 to 1658. During his reign he had difficulties amongst uprisings in Bhundelkhand and the Deccan. The first was easily put down, but the latter was more difficult. And the Marathas also were a major threat. He also seized and remodeled the great Shiva Temple in Agra, the Tejo Mahila or Tajo Mahalaya, and turned it into a graveyard for one of his dead wives and renamed it Taj Mahal. [This is a separate issue that I have dealt with extensively elsewhere, such as on my website.]

Much more could be written about Shah Jahan, of which we get a clearer picture of the conditions and true spirit of the time from the *Badshahnama*, the story of Shah Jahan written by his chronicler Abdul Hamid Lahori. For example, at the time of 1633, it had been reported that many temples in the city of Benares had been partially rebuilt and the Hindus wanted to complete them. But Shah Jahan ordered that all temples in his whole dominion should be cut down. Thus, it was reported that by his order 76 temples in Benares had been destroyed. Christian churches at Agra and Lahore were also demolished. In a manner befitting the Prophet, he had ten thousand inhabitants executed by being "blown up with powder, drowned in water or burnt by fire." Four thousand were taken captive to Agra where they were tortured in the attempt to convert them to Islam. Only a few became apostates and changed their religion, while the remainder were trampled to death by elephants, except for the younger women who went to harems.

It was in 1635 when soldiers captured some ladies of the Bundela royal family, after they had not been killed by the Rajput Jajhar Singh and his sons. Thus, the mothers and daughters of these kings were left to be taken, robbed of their religion, and forced into the life of the Mughal harem.

Shah Jahan himself went to Orcha, the capital of the Bundelas, and destroyed the massive Bir Singh Dev temple and put a mosque in its place. He also took the two small sons and one grandson of Jujhar Singh and forced them to adopt Islam. However, Udaybhan, another son of Jujhar Singh, and a minister, Shyam Dawa, escaped and fled to Golconda but were captured and brought back to Shah Jahan who gave them a choice of converting to Islam or die. They chose that they would rather die than to convert to such a religion.

Shah Jahan put enormous economic pressure on Hindus, particularly peasants, to become Muslims. The criminals too were forced to become Muslims.

From the *Badshahnama* we learn that when Shuja was appointed governor of Kabul, he carried on a ruthless war in the Hindu territory beyond the Indus...The sword of Islam yielded a rich crop of converts... Most of the women (to save their honor) burnt themselves to death. Those captured were distributed among Muslim Mansabdars.

Under Shah Jahan peasants were compelled to sell their women and children to meet their revenue requirements... The peasants were carried off to various markets and fairs to be sold with their poor unhappy wives carrying their small children crying and lamenting. According to Qaznivi, Shah Jahan had decreed they should be sold to Muslim lords.

The last ten years of Shah Jahan's life were miserable. He was imprisoned in the Red Fort at Agra by his son Aurangzeb and also was ill with strangury, in which case urine is released slowly and with much pain.

Aurangzeb was one of the worst of the fanatical Islamic rulers, and the most could be and has been written about him and his treacherous activities. He reigned from 1658 to 1707. He was Shah Jahan's third son and ascended the throne by killing his other brothers and imprisoning his father in the Agra fort until his death. It was during his reign that the Mughal Empire reached its height, stretching from Kashmir in the north to Jinji in the south, and from the Hindu Kush in the west to Chittagong in the east.

He kept himself within the narrow confines of strict Islamic law, and he disposed of Akbar's *sulah-i-kul* (peace to all) secular principles. He also vigorously enforced the *Jaziya* tax on all non-Muslims with severity and destroyed many Vedic temples. However, at the time this did not make Muslims in general more loyal to the Islamic state, although, the vast native Hindu majority became even more alienated.

In his lifetime he destroyed more than 10,000 Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples, and often erected mosques in their place. In 1669, in Agra he had hacked off the limbs of the recalcitrant Hindu King Gokla, and in 1672 several thousand revolting Hindus were slaughtered in Mewat.

In Udaipur, all Hindus of the town were killed while trying to defend the main temple from destruction. In all, 172 temples were destroyed in Udaipur. In Amber, 66 temples were pulled down, and all Hindu clerks were dismissed from the office of the Imperial Empire.

Aurangzeb was usually preoccupied with putting down the revolts in various regions of his empire. The Marathas were also growing in strength and influence in western India, especially under Shivaji, the dynamic leader of the Marathas. Only after Shivaji's death was Aurangzeb able to expand southward. Apart from him, no one else, except the British, was able to hold India under a single rule.

In his style of rule, Aurangzeb inadvertently broke up the empire. After his death, the Mughal Empire collapsed with internal conflicts among the successors and was reduced to the area around Delhi. Various provinces declared their independence and the Marathas, under the leadership of Peshwas, gradually extended their hold in North India. The foreign invasions of Nadir Shah Abdali in 1729, and Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1747-61, further weakened the empire. The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was imprisoned by the British after the 1857 mutiny. Bahadur Shah was born of a Rajput mother in 1775. Before his arrest, he was quite liberal and would sometimes dress as a Hindu and visit Hindu temples with a *tilok* mark on his forehead. He had also banned cow slaughter in 1857 to help solidify Hindu-Muslim relations during the Indian mutiny.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GOVINDAJI TEMPLE IN VRINDAVANA

It was Aurangzeb who came to the holy land of Vrindavana to destroy temples and deities. But before the attack of the Muslims, many deities were taken out of Vrindavana and brought to Jaipur and areas nearby, thus saving them from damage and destruction. The Govindaji temple was established by Rupa Gosvami where he discovered the Gopala deity. The beautiful temple was made out of red sandstone and completed in 1590. The temple is now only two storeys tall but once reached up to seven storeys in height. It is said that on a clear evening you could see the large *arati* flame on the top of it all the way from Agra. The Muslim fanatic Aurangzeb, being extremely angry at not finding the deities in the temples, dismantled the upper five storeys of the Govindaji temple due to his envy. While his men were destroying the temple, there was a loud thunderous noise that shook the ground. This put fear into the hearts of the men and they immediately stopped and ran away. Due to fear of the Moghuls, before they arrived, the devotees moved the original deities to Jaipur where today many pilgrims go to see them. The original

Govindaji deity is said to have been installed thousands of years ago by Vajranabha, Lord Krishna's grandson.

It was under Aurangzeb in 1645 when the temple of Chintaman near Sarashpur, Gujarat was converted into a mosque, with the slaughter of a cow to make it official. Three years later, he sent Mir Jumla to Cooch Bihar to destroy all Vedic temples and erect mosques in their places. It was the general himself who used a battle axe to break the deity of Narayana.

In April of 1669, Aurangzeb established a general policy to destroy the Vedic schools and temples that were expounding the knowledge and principles of worshiping the deity form of God, especially in Benares (Varanasi) where people of all faiths had been visiting from years long ago to be educated in the spiritual sciences. It was also at that time when he tore down the Viswanatha Shiva temple and built a mosque in its place. The present temple we see today was built in 1776 by Ahalya Bai of Indore. The mosque on the other side of the courtyard is separated from the temple by the Jnana Vapi well (Well of Wisdom) where the original Shiva *linga* was hid in order to keep the Muslim invaders from harming it. Some people say the original *linga* was never recovered from the well and is still at the bottom. Needless to say, with the temple and mosque so close, police patrol the mosque continually to prevent disturbances. Aurangzeb plundered numerous other temples in Varanasi.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KESHAVA TEMPLE IN MATHURA

The Islamic record of *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* describes many other instances of Aurangzeb's fanatical cruelty, such as when Aurangzeb plundered the city of Mathura and destroyed the famous Keshava Rai temple in January of 1670. This temple marked the place where Lord Krishna had taken birth, a most important temple to the Vedic tradition, and he built a mosque in its place. It is said that the richly jeweled deities were taken to Agra where they were placed beneath the steps leading to the Nawab Begum Sahib's (Jahanara's) mosque so they could be trampled under the feet of the Muslims. At that time, the name of Mathura was changed to Islamabad for having destroyed the very foundation of deity worship.

During the same year, the Sita-Rama temple of Soron was destroyed, along with the Devi Patan temple at Gonda. The local

governor of Malwa, under Aurangzeb, had also sent 400 troops to destroy all the temples in Ujjain. Furthermore, as described in *Muraqat-i-Abul Hasan*, soldiers and assistants from Cuttack, Orissa, and on to Medinipur in Bengal were ordered to destroy every house with a Vedic deity that was built in the last 12 years. No renovations of any such temples were to be allowed. These kinds of atrocities continued on a regular basis, for which many more descriptions could be supplied. Many of these towns and cities had been where temples were destroyed two or three times. So it is amazing that the Hindu people would continue to rebuild their temples regardless of how many times the Muslims would come to tear them down. They were so strong in their spiritual insights that they never gave up their faith.

Aurangzeb once took offense when the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur sided with the Brahmanas concerning an issue posed by them. The emperor had received reports of the guru performing miracles that were contrary to Islam. Thus, Aurangzeb issued an arrest for the Guru to be brought before him. Tegh Bahadur nominated his son Govind Rai as the next guru and then started for Delhi with a few of his associates to take up the Brahmanas' case. However, on July 12, 1675, they were taken into custody and brought to Sirhind, where they remained in confinement for about four months until taken to Delhi on the orders of Aurangzeb.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was tortured while in confinement in Sirhind and was finally taken to Delhi in an iron cage on November 5, 1675. The Subedar of Delhi and the royal Kazi ordered the Guru and his five followers to perform miracles, accept Islam, or face death. He denied having any special powers and refused to convert. They were ready to face death. Bhai Mata das was tied upright between two logs and savagely cut in two from the head down with a saw. Dayal das was boiled to death in a cauldron of water. While Sati das was roasted alive while wrapped in cotton. Thereafter, Guru Tegh Bahadur was chained and then beheaded on November 11. In his dying days, he would repeat that his disciples should give up their lives but never their faith.

We can only imagine the level of insanity and most sadistic cruelty one possessed to order such types of death upon people simply because they would not convert to a different religion. But this was not unusual regarding the savage ways that were forced on the Hindus and any non-Muslim people. In this way, Guru Tegh Bahadur had laid down his life in defense of freedom of worship and conscience.

Afterwards, the destruction of all Sikh *gurudwaras* was an additional part of Aurangzeb's agenda. In Punjab, Muslim governors killed hundreds of Sikh children and made Sikh women eat the flesh of

their own killed children. Banda was another great Sikh who replaced Guru Govind as someone to lead the Sikhs. He was arrested by the Muslim emperor Bhadur Shah and taken to Delhi. There his son was killed in his presence and he was made to eat the flesh of his own children who had been killed before his eyes. Later, Banda was killed by being crushed under the foot of an elephant. Any Muslim bringing the head of a dead Sikh was also awarded money.

It was in 1679 when the *jizyah* tax was imposed again on all Hindus in order to help gather money for the spread Islam and stamp out all practices of the "infidels." To protest this, the Hindus organized a blockage of Aurangzeb's way to the Jama Masjid mosque in Delhi on one Friday. Aurangzeb ordered his men to lead the elephants through the crowd, which caused many men to be trampled to death.

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* records that Darab Khan was sent with a strong army to punish the Rajputs and to destroy the Vedic temples of Khandela. He attacked in March of 1679 and caused the ruin of numerous temples in Khandela and Sanula. The *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* describes that in May of 1679 Khan Jahan Bahadur arrived from Jodhpur with several carts of deities from the Hindu temples that had been destroyed. Many had precious stones on them, which gave reason for Aurangzeb to praise him. Aurangzeb gave order that some of these deities taken to the outer offices to be cast away, while others were placed beneath the steps of the mosque to be trampled under foot, where they remained until any semblance of them was gone, where fragments may still be there to this day.

In January of 1680, the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* describes, prince Mohammad Azam and Khan Jahan Bahadur were authorized to go to Udaipur. Ruhullah Khan and Yakkattaz Khan also went, and there they destroyed numerous temples, among which were some considered to be the wonders of the time. Aurangzeb visited the tank of Udayasagar and ordered all three of the Hindus temples there to be razed to the ground. Then Hasan Ali Khan arrived and stated that 172 temples from nearby areas were also destroyed. Aurangzeb then went to Chitor in February where it was reported that 63 more temples were put to ruin. During that time, Abu Tarab also reported that 66 more temples were brought to the ground in Amber, near Jaipur. Later, the significant temple of Someshwar in Mewar was also destroyed.

In 1684, he turned south to Bijapur with an army of 80,000 troops. The city and the sultan of the town finally surrendered after a desperate siege that went on for over a year. Its sultan became a prisoner

while the kingdom became a Moghul province. Then he soon went on to Golconda in 1685, which fell and became part of the empire in 1687.

However, in the *Kalimat-i-Tayyibat*, Aurangzeb wrote to Zulfiqar Khan and complained about how strongly the temples in Maharashtra were built, and how he did not have enough manpower to pull them all down efficiently enough. He suggested a team to find the temples, and another that could leisurely stay and pull them down at their own pace.

Aurangzeb's campaign in the south hit a high point when in 1688 they captured Shambaji and his Brahmana chief minister in an ambush. He was the successor of the great Hindu hero Shivaji. They were brought to the imperial camp where Shambaji, in great defiance, heaped insults on both the emperor and the Prophet. Aurangzeb then had him tortured in a most cruel way by being dismembered at each joint of each limb. The inhumanity of Aurangzeb was made clear through this if nothing else.

Demolition of temples continued to be one of Aurangzeb's favorite pastimes. Khafi Khan records in his *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* that in 1690 he ordered the destruction of all temples in places such as Ellora, Tryambakeshwar, Narasinghpur, and Pandharpur, all significant and holy places of Vedic tradition. Then he went back to Bijapur in 1698 for more of the same. Even two years before he died, in 1705, Aurangzeb ordered Muhammad Khalil and Khidmat Rai, two of the most notorious of his hatchet-men, to proceed to Pandharpur and demolish the famous temple there, and then take the butchers of the camp and slaughter cows on the site, which would prevent the Hindus from ever wanting to rebuild a temple there.

Ayodhya was also plundered by Aurangzeb, especially the place called Sri Ram Janma Bhoomi, or the location where Lord Rama is said to have taken birth in this world during Treta-yuga, many years prior to the appearance of Lord Krishna. This is another very important temple to Hindus that was torn down by Aurangzeb who built a mosque in its place 500 years ago. It seems clear that if the Muslims of today really wanted to maintain peaceful and progressive relations with the Hindus of India, they would not mind giving back these locations that are important to the Vedic tradition. But if they are not really interested in having idyllic relations, then they will not have any regard for giving these places back. The latter seems to be the case. Yet, when Hindus want to defend their culture and their holy places such as Ayodhya, they are treated as fundamentalists, and great protests are heard throughout the Muslim world over a place that had originally been Hindu all along, as if they

had not done enough damage already as can be seen through history and how Muslims had destroyed hundreds and thousands of Hindu temples.

In connection with the Sikh Guru Govind Singh (1675-1708), the son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Raja Ajmer Chand, who was in the Deccan, sent a report to Aurangzeb on the anti-state activities of the Guru. It said that the Guru had formed a new religion and was asking all Hindus to join him and wage war against the Moghul Empire. Aurangzeb, alarmed at this grave report, ordered the dispatch of all available troops at Delhi, Sirhind, and Lahore and join under the command of Wajid Khan, which led to the seven month siege at Anandpur where the Guru was staying. After many attempts to make the Guru Govind Singh leave the fort under promises of a safe passage, on December 5, 1705 he left Anandpur. However, the Moghuls threw away all promises and set out in hot pursuit of the Guru.

On reaching Sirsa, the Guru entrusted his mother and two young sons to another Sikh to be taken to Delhi to join his wives there. On the way, they met Ganga Ram Kaul, a Kashmiri Brahmana who had been an employee in the Guru's household. He took them instead to his village Saheri where he usurped the considerable cash and jewelry the Guru's mother had on her and betrayed them to the Khan of Morinda, who passed them on to Wazir Khan of Sirhind.

Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan of Malerkotla was against any harm coming to the two small boys of the Guru, who were under the age of ten, as that was against Islam. But Dewan Sucha Nand Bhandari Khatri was filled with hatred toward the Guru and the Sikh Khalsa fraternity. Thus, on their refusal to accept Islam, the two young sons were tortured for four days, and were then bricked alive. But when the wall of bricks reached the height of their necks, the wall fell down, so then on December 12, 1705, their throats were slit. The Guru's mother died of shock on hearing the news. Only after much fighting and the loss of Sikh soldiers was the escape of the Guru possible.

Thereafter, Guru Govind Singh changed the Sikh disposition. He also established that from him onward the guru would be the holy *Granth*. In 1708, he was stabbed by an unknown Afghan. Knowing he was near death, he went into an enclosure to leave this world in the same manner as the Hindu sages.

According to some reports, as written in Vincent Smith's *History of India*, before Aurangzeb died on February 21, 1707, he was full of remorse for at least some of what he had done. He had written to his sons Tara Azam and Kam Bakhsh, "I know not who I am, where I shall go and what will happen to this sinner full of sins. My years have gone by

profitless. God has been in my heart but my darkened eyes have recognized not His light. There is no hope for me in the future. When I have lost hope in myself, how can I have hope in others. I have greatly sinned and I know not what torments await me (in the afterlife)" It appears that all the dark deeds he did and the suffering he had caused to others in the name of Islam and Allah had failed to give him peace of mind and consolation.

THE MUSLIMS BURN LORD JAGANNATHA AT PURI

In the books known as *Madala Panji* and *Chakada pothi*, along with the Muslim recorded history in *Aini-I-Akbari* by Abul Fazl, there is the description of the time when the deities of Lord Jagannatha, Balarama, and Lady Subhadra in Jagannatha Puri were desecrated and burned in a fire by the Muslims. It was in the year 1590.

The Afghan Muslim king of Bengal, Sultan Sulaiman, sent his general Kalapahad to Puri to plunder the opulent temple of Lord Jagannatha. In his attempt to do this terrible deed, he was able to take over the temple and seize great valuable ornaments of the deities as well as the deities themselves. He took them to Calcutta to the bank of the Hooghly River. There he lit a huge fire and put the deities in the fire to destroy them.

All set to destroy the deities, Kalapahad was unaware of one devotee of Jagannatha who had followed them from Puri. He was Bishara Mahanty and waited for the right moment to jump into the fire. The Muslims were shocked by what appeared to be an attempt at suicide, but they could do nothing to stop him. The fire continued for hours, after which there were only a few Muslim guards who remained. The fire became smaller, when the devotee suddenly jumped out from the flames unharmed and walked off in front of the surprised guards.

Bishara Mahanty's plan was to jump in the fire and grab the *nabhi-brahma*, or spiritual essence inside the deity of Lord Jagannatha. It was due to the contact of this powerful *nabhi-brahma*, and of course by the mercy of the Lord, he was unharmed by the flames.

Though Kalapahad threw the remains of the deities into the ocean, thinking himself victorious over the great Lord Jagannatha and finishing off a most ancient and revered tradition of the Vedic culture, Bishara Mahanty returned to Orissa with the *nabhi-brahma* and went to the village of Khurda.

The residents of Puri were greatly upset in separation from Lord Jagannatha, including the King of Puri, Ramachandra Deva. But the king had a dream wherein Lord Jagannatha told him not to lament. "I am still present. My dear devotee, Bishara Mahanty, retrieved My *nabhi-brahma*. He is staying in Khurda. You go there and bring Me back to the temple."

So the king did as he was told and finding the *nabhi-brahma*, he had new deities of Lord Jagannatha, Balarama, and Subhadra made. Afterwards, with great celebration and happiness of the devotees, he brought Lord Jagannatha back to Puri and reinstalled Him in the temple. Bishara Mahanty was greatly honored by the king for his service. The king also become known as Dvitiya Indradyumna, or Abhinaba Indradyumna—the second or new Indradyumna, after the king Indradyumna who had originally installed the first deity of Lord Jagannatha. Thus, Lord Jagannatha and the great tradition connected with Him were able to continue.

THE BAHAMANIS

The Bahamani kingdom (1346 CE – 1689 CE) was another kingdom that needs to be mentioned, though it did not play the most significant role in the history of India. It was founded by Hasan Gangu, who led a rebellion against Sultan Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq and proclaimed the independence of the Bahamani kingdom. He took the title of Bahaman Shah and became the first ruler of the dynasty. This kingdom included the whole of the northern Deccan up to the Krishna River. South of the kingdom was the Vijayanagara Empire, with which it had to fight continuous wars for various reasons.

The most remarkable figure in the Bahamani kingdom was Firuz Shah Bahamani (1397 – 1422), who fought three major battles with the Vijayanagara Empire without any major result. He was well acquainted with religious and natural sciences. He wanted to make the Deccan the cultural centre of India. Ferhishta, the court poet, calls him an orthodox Muslim, his only weakness being his fondness for drinking wine and listening to music.

Through an assortment of party politics, the kingdom could never become united, and finally various governors became independent and divided themselves into five parts, namely, Adil Shahi of Bijapur, Qutub Shahi of Golconda, Nizam Shahi of Ahmadnagar, Barid Shahi of Bidar, and Imad Shahi of Berar.

These kingdoms together crusaded against the Vijayanagara Empire and defeated it in 1565. Later on, Imad Shahi was conquered by Nizamshah (1574 CE) and Barid Shahi was annexed by Adil Shah (1619). These three kingdoms played a leading role in the Deccan politics till their absorption in the Mughal Empire during the seventeenth century. It was Aurangzeb, the Mughal king, who, after the death of Shivaji, marched towards the south and annexed Bijapur (1686) and Golconda (1689) and brought an end to the Bahamani kingdom.

SHIVAJI AND THE MARATHAS

At this point it would be difficult to justify not including a short description of the hero Shivaji. The Maratha dynasties of the ancient (pre-Muslim) period are the Chalukyas (500 CE to 750 CE), the Rastrakutas (750 to 978) and the Yadavas or Jadhavs (1175 to 1318). They opposed the Muslim invasion in 1314 under the last Yadava king, but they were defeated and became vassals and mercenaries (Sardars or generals) of the Muslim rulers, collecting revenue for them.

Shivaji's mother, Jijabai, was a direct descendent of the Yadava royal family of Devagiri, and deeply influenced her son, together with his teacher Dadaji Kondeo and great saints like Jnanesvara and Tukaram.

In 1645, at the age of 17, at the cave temple of Shiva Rairesvar in the Sayhadris, Shivaji and his friends took a blood oath to establish a free Hindu state, called "Hindavi Svaraja". In the course of time, it became the strongest power in India, its territories stretching from Attock in present Pakistan to Cuttack in Orissa.

Shivaji started by capturing the fortress of Torana from the Muslim ruler at Bijapur. The Sultan of Bijapur, Adil Shah, sent his most powerful general Afzal Khan to punish Shivaji. His plan was to get Shivaji down from the Sahyadri hills by destroying Hindu temples in the plains at Tuljapur, Pandharpur, and Shikhar Shenganapur. Shivaji sent Afzal Khan a letter inviting him to come up into the hills to meet him with a few select soldiers for a duel, and Afzal Khan accepted. He arrived at Pratapgad on the 10th of November, 1659. Afzal Khan approached the apparently unarmed Shivaji and while embracing him tried to stab him, but Shivaji was wearing a coat of armor under his heavy silk robes, and hiding two small weapons, a Wagh Nakh, or sharp blade resembling tiger's claws, and a Bicchwa, a small curved dagger. Shivaji struck back and Afzal Khan was killed. The Khan's army, waiting in the valley, was defeated by the Marathas who jumped out

from the jungles around Pratapgad fort. Later, Adil Shah sent another general, Siddhi Jouhar, who besieged Shivaji's fortress in Panhalgad for some months, but Shivaji managed to escape to Vishalgad. Then the Bijapur ruler dropped the idea of fighting against the Marathas and Shivaji turned his attention to the Mughal Empire.

Aurangzeb was furious about Shivaji's attacks and sent his uncle Shaista Khan with a big army who destroyed temples, forts, towns, villages, and fields on its path. Shaista established his camp in Shivaji's home, the Lal Mahal in Pune, and put up his harem in Shivaji's Devghar (prayer room). Finally, in April of 1663, Shivaji sneaked into the Lal Mahal at night time and attacked the Khan cutting his fingers while he was trying to escape from the window. He spared the Khan's life on the request of the Khan's wife, and this gave the Khan the opportunity to call his troops. Shivaj escaped. The Khan returned to Delhi and Aurangzeb sent another general, Mirza Raja Jai Singh from the Suryavanshi Kachhawaha, a Hindu general in the service of the Muslim. This Hindu dynasty had submitted to the Muslims by giving their daughters in marriage to the Mughal Padishah. Mirza and his general, Diler Khan, laid siege to Purandar and systematically destroyed rural Maharastra. The Maratha fort commander at Purandar, Murar Baji, stormed out of the fort and pushed back the Mughals to Diler Khan's camp in the plains. Diler Khan tried to bribe Murar Baji by offering him the post of general in his army, but Murar Baji refused the proposal and was killed during his visit in the Mughal camp.

Shivaji signed a treaty with Mirza Raja Jai Singh, and as a part of the conditions he went with him to Agra to meet Aurangzeb. There he was imprisoned in Mirza's house. While he was waiting to be shifted to the Mughal dungeons, he escaped with his son Shambaji while hiding in two large baskets of fruits and sweetmeats that were to be sent from the house as gifts to brahmanas. Shivaji's general Netaji Palkar, also captured, was forced to convert to Islam and change his name to Quli Mohammed Khan, serving as a Mughal soldier in Afghanistan, but he managed to escape and return to Shivaji and to his Hindu faith. Some of his other friends, however, were tortured to death.

After escaping from Agra, Shivaji regrouped his army and recaptured all the forts that he had been forced to surrender to the Mughals with the treaty of Purandar, including the fort of Kondana, a strategic position near Pune, in the center of a line including Rajgad, Purandar, and Torna. The conquest of Kondana was made possible by the bravery of Tanaji who died in the fight. So the fort was renamed as "Singhagad" in honor of their "lion" warrior.

Then Shivaji was crowned as the king of the Marathas by Ganga Bhatt, a Brahmana from Benares. The coronation took place at Raigad on June 6, 1674.

In the days after the coronation, a Maratha Sardar (general) abducted the daughter-in-law of the Muslim Subahadar of Kalyan near Mumbai, to offer her as a Nazarana (tribute) to the new king. To his surprise, Shivaji returned the girl to her family with all respect, and rebuked the general warning that any Maratha general who committed a similar offense to women would be punished with the amputation of his hands. It is said that the girl then called him "an angel" and prayed the Lord to bless him with all success. Later, Shivaji launched his campaign in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu up to Thanjavur. From 1674 to Shivaji's death in 1680, his kingdom was relatively peaceful because the Mughals had given up trying to molest the Marathas. The kingdom of Shivaji, like the kingdom of Mewad, was bold enough to issue their own coinage with Sanskrit inscriptions in gold and copper. After Shivaji's death, Aurangzeb ordered all these coins to be collected and melted.

Shivaji's son Shambaji became the next king, but he was not as qualified as his father. He was finally captured by the Mughals and tortured to death, as previously described. His step-brother, Rajaram, was then crowned king, but he was also weak and fled Raigad when the fort was about to be besieged by Aurangzeb, leaving behind his wife and son who were taken captive by the Mughals. He spent the rest of his life fleeing around, while his generals like Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav fought a guerrilla war against the Muslims. In 1700, Rajaram fell ill and died, and his wife Tarabai reigned from 1700 to 1707, with the support of the two generals.

In 1707, Aurangzeb died and his son Azamshah proclaimed himself emperor. In order to win the Marathas to his side, Azamshah freed Rajaram's son Shahu, who had been a prisoner from 1689 to 1707, and Shahu claimed the throne against Tarabai. He fought the Maratha army and he installed himself as the Chatrapati (king of the Marathas). However, he had to rely heavily on his assistant, who became Prime Minister (Peshwa) and the actual ruler. From that time, the Prime Ministers became more powerful than the king.

The Maratha forces led by the first Peshwa, Balaji Vishvanath, defeated the Mughal army in Delhi, in an alliance with the Syed brothers against the Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyyar. This was the beginning of the Maratha's influence on Delhi that lasted until 1803, when they were supplanted by the British. In 1740, about 80 years after Shivaji, the Marathas fought against the invasion of the Afghan Nadir Shah and his

general Ahmed Shah Durrani (Abdali) who had attacked north India taking advantage of the decline of the Mughal Empire. Another ambitious general, Najib Khan, wanted to crown himself emperor and ruler of India by capturing Delhi. He allied with Ahmed Shah but they were both defeated by the Marathas who were lead by Srimant Raghunatha Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar. The Marathas pursued the Afghans into Punjab up to Khyber Pass on the Afghan border. Najib Khan convinced Malhar Rao Holkar to release him, but as soon as he was released he organized the killing of Dattaji Shinde, the eldest brother of Mahadji Shinde, and again encouraged Ahmed Shah to invade India.

The continuous court intrigues at Pune gradually weakened the Marathas and divided them. The ensuing war against the Afghans had a long stand off of one year from January 1760 to January 1761, in spite of the Marathas' conquest of Delhi and Kunjapura (the treasury and armory of the Afghans). In the final battle at Panipat, 100,000 Maratha troops were killed in 8 hours, but the Afghans, who had also suffered heavy losses, decided to retreat back to Afghanistan, never to return to India again. Later, the Sikhs, united under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, completed the task of the Marathas, invading Abdali's kingdom and capturing his capital city Kabul. Between 1761 and 1790 Mahadji Shinde, Nana Phadnavis, and Shrimant Madhav Rao Peshwa fought against the growing power of the British in the three Anglo-Maratha wars. Finally, they succumbed in the third war of 1817.

* * *

The conclusion is that, as described by Sita Rama Goel in his *The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India* (Chapter 7, page 8), the general pattern of events lead by the Muslims went as follows:

> "The magnitude of crimes credited to Muslim monarchs by the medieval Muslim historians, was beyond measure. With a few exceptions, Muslim kings and commanders were monsters who stopped at no crime when it came to their Hindu subjects. But what strikes as more significant is the broad pattern of those crimes. The pattern is that of a *jihad* [Islamic holy war] in which the ghazis [killers of infidels] of Islam 1) invade infidel lands; 2) massacre as many infidel men, women, and children, particularly Brahmins, as they like after winning a victory; 3) capture the survivors to be sold as

> slaves; 4) plunder every place and person; 5) demolish idolatrous places of worship and build mosques in their places; and 6) defile idols which are flung into public squares or made into steps leading to mosques [so people could walk all over them]."

HOW TO WIN

The Muslim power was winding down in places like Bengal, South India, Sindh, and the Punjab. In other ways, the Hindu strength was resurging and the power in India was returning to the Marathas, Jats, and Sikhs by the time the British were entering the country. The Mughal emperor in Delhi was becoming increasingly helpless.

The Mughal Empire was never on sound footing, no matter how much murder, bloodshed, terror, destruction, rape, and enslavement was used. This pattern and methodology is something to remember. This is the terrorist's policy. Nonetheless, the Mughal Empire started breaking up quickly right after Aurangzeb abandoned Akbar's policy of accommodating the Hindus. He wanted to establish a terrorist's policy of keeping control over people and territories through the use of terror, fear, and strong oppression of Hindus. Of course, this could not last forever. As the saying goes, "A person forced against his will, remains of the same opinion still." Thus, Rajasthan and Bundelkhand reclaimed their independence even before the death of Aurangzeb. The Jats did the same thing in the area of Bharatpur and Mathura. The Marathas did much damage to Aurangzeb's authority when they made imperial seats in places like Ahmadnagar and Aurangabad in spite of the large Muslim garrisons. They made a deeper impression when they invaded the territory of Khandesh and Gujarat. It was this resurgence of the Hindus and the Vedic culture that pulled down the Mughal Empire within 20 years after Aurangzeb's death in 1707.

Therefore, the key to this shattering of the Muslim influence took place by the simple resolution of "never giving up." The truth is that only a few of the medieval Hindu princes actually gave up and surrendered to Islam. Islam had a struggle to conquer and then maintain its empire against tough Hindu resistance. Hindus survived in India not because of a lack of serious attempts by the invading forces to squash them, but because the Vedic principle of encouraging the freedom of the individual and the right for the personal quest for spiritual self-realization has always outweighed the propaganda of forced conversion, and the

prison of religion in which one is required to follow the herd. Indians and Hindus have never done that and never will. And that is what the Vedic culture promotes. This is why India and the Vedic tradition are one: you cannot really have one without the other. India or Bharata Varsha is Vedic culture, and India will not remain so without it. Thus, regardless of what religious affiliation a person may say he or she is connected to, the Vedic ideals run in their blood, even if it seems to be sleeping or dormant within them. But now it is time to awaken that ideal so that we can all work together to preserve, protect, and promote the eternal principles of the Vedic path of Sanatana-dharma in one huge Global Vedic Community.

The Vedic culture has passed the tests of time and the people who follow it are strong in character and resolute in purpose. It shows that if we still hold the Vedic principles close to our heart and follow them, and are not afraid to stand up strongly for Dharma, then in the end these will continue in spite of whatever happens in this world. The forces of *adharma* may try to overcome Dharma, whether it is through so-called religions that are *adharmic*, which may focus on ethnic differences rather than our spiritual similarities, or *adharmic* rulers or politicians who put their own agenda ahead of everything else and who have no regard for genuine spiritual traditions. But in the end truth prevails, eternal spiritual knowledge prevails, and Dharma prevails. The best we can do is to always stick to that and in the end we will be but instruments working together for the continuation of Sanatana-dharma, not only for ourselves, but for future generations in India and for all people everywhere.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Portuguese and the Goan Inquisition

Unfortunately, the challenges that India had to meet were not merely with the Muslims. Others also came to India with less than respectful intentions. The Portuguese arrived as early as 1498 via the ocean route discovered by Vasco-da-Gama via the Cape of Good Hope, when Constantinople came under Arab control.

Goa came under the Delhi Sultanate in 1312. Then in 1370 they had to surrender it to Harihara I of Vijayanagara. The monarchs of Vijayanagara ruled over it until 1469. Then it passed on to the Bahmani sultans of Gulbarga. Then the rule went to the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, during which time the Muslim pilgrims embarked on their journey to Mecca from Goa. After that, the Portuguese arrived.

Europe had always been interested in India, especially for trade purposes when it became obvious how much India had to offer, especially in regard to spices, textiles, and other oriental and commercial products. The Portuguese Vasco de Gama was graciously received by the *zamorin*, the Hindu king of Calicut who granted him permission to build warehouses for the goods he was trading. However, the Hindu tolerance was exploited by the Portuguese who wanted an increasing amount of facility for their purposes, and that all trade with the Muslims be abandoned. The attempt at establishing a base in Bengal was quickly stopped by the local Sultan, Jahangir, who killed 4,000 Portuguese at one time. Thus, the Portuguese had to go elsewhere and went to the western coasts.

In the first decade after the Portuguese came to India, they exhibited horrible atrocities, including burning Arab ships that carried not only cargo, but also men, women, and children to the haj, chopping off noses of unarmed fishermen, bombarding port cities on the Malabar coast, forcing the conversion to Catholicism of the women and daughters of the defeated men, and also changing the temples and mosques into Catholic churches. The natives of the area went to the sultan of Gujarat

who brought assistance from Egypt and Turkey for a naval attack on the Portuguese at Chaul in 1507-08. However, the Portuguese viceroy, d'Almeida, arranged a large fleet and brought a mighty victory in 1509 against the Muslim fleets at Diu.

In 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque captured the island of Goa and the surrounding territories on the west coast of India from the Sultan of Bijapur and made it the capital of the Portuguese eastern empire. Goa was a strategic location, and from there the Portuguese could supervise Malabar, control the pilgrim traffic to Mecca, as well as the general trade to Egypt, Iraq, and Persia, including the East Indian spices at their source. However, the Portuguese irked some of the Mughal rulers because of the toll they took on the trade from the port of Surat. They deeply felt that no faith need be kept with an infidel. It was from this period that the word *feringi* (lit. farangi, frank) acquired influence and popular usage.

Some of the Muslim rulers, such as Akbar, were a little fascinated by them and gave them freedom to preach their message, and the New Testament was translated into Persian. But it has been noted elsewhere that Akbar gave the Portuguese preacher, like Xavier, little opportunity for religious discussion when they came to talk with him. And the power over the Indian seas was always in dispute between the Portuguese and the Muslims during the 16th century, as was the superiority of Christianity and Islam, which became more intense.

However, the Portuguese did not provide a favorable impression of any religion that was said to be brought by the "Prince of Peace", Jesus Christ. They would go without bathing for months, and be under the influence of alcohol at any time, and would show violence toward unarmed people, women, and children for any reason. They were the epitome of barbarism.

An interesting but totally self-serving policy was one that Albuquerque encouraged, which was that of mixed race marriages. His idea was to develop a population that was Portuguese in blood and Catholic in religion, but who would be committed by taste to Portuguese settlements, and, thus, form a self-perpetuating garrison. This formed the race that has become known as Luso-Indians and later as Goans. Though they are Indian in blood, they still look somewhat Western and are usually Catholic.

The Portuguese were soon followed by European rivals like the French, Dutch, and British. The rivalry that appeared between the Dutch and English resulted in the start of the Dutch East India Company that worked primarily in Southeast Asia and Indonesia (known to Europeans

as the East Indies), and the British East India Company, which had to settle for "second-best", which was India.

It was in 1538 that General Ignatius de Loyola in Rome, upon the request of the King of Portugal, sent missionaries to the orient. To answer the call, Francis Xavier, later known as Saint Xavier, went to Goa in 1542. Though he started his preaching projects on his own, he also later laid the foundations for the Inquisition in Goa, similar to that of Spain and Portugal, where he had experience in persecuting thousands of Jews and Muslims.

Saint Francis Xavier worked feverishly to convert as many Hindus to Christianity as possible, and baptized as many natives as he could, and exploited the impressionability of children as much as possible. He once wrote in a letter to the Society of Jesus, "Following the baptisms, the new Christians return to their homes and come back with their wives and families to be in turn also prepared for baptism. After all have been baptized, I order that everywhere the temples of the false gods be pulled down and idols broken. I know not how to describe in words the joy I feel before the spectacle of pulling down and destroying the idols by the very people who formerly worshipped them." He went on to say that even children "... show an ardent love for the Divine law, and an extraordinary zeal for learning our holy religion and imparting it to others. Their hatred for idolatry is marvelous. They get into feuds with the heathens about it, and whenever their own parents practice it, they reproach them and come off to tell me at once. Whenever I hear of any act of idolatrous worship, I go to the place with a large band of these children, who very soon load the devil with a greater amount of insult and abuse than he has lately received of honor and worship from their parents, relations, and acquaintances. The children run at the idols, upset them, dash them down, break them to pieces, spit on them, trample on them, kick them about, and in short heap on them every possible outrage."

This is how Xavier taught the children to behave toward their own heritage. He did this in Quilon, and this was after the Hindu King of Quilon had respectfully received him and benevolently given him a large grant of land and other resources so he could build churches for his religion. What a way to pay back the respect and liberality the King had shown him.

Once when some Hindus had been baptized as Christians, Xavier heard that they still were worshiping deities in their homes. He went there and ordered the hut to be burnt to the ground as a warning of what would happen to others if they did not follow the Christian tenets and

resorted to their old ways. This was but an example of Saint Francis Xavier's violent form of evangelism. All this proselytizing by Xavier was but to further the Portuguese imperialistic designs, since he was under the protection of the Portuguese King who wanted to expand in power and influence in the region. What better way to do that than to first expand the religion and Western values through the area, which would make it easier then to expand the kingdom. It is a method that is still used today.

Though Saint Francis Xavier has been given much respect in India, with many schools named after him, his real intention of coming to India was to uproot "paganism" or Hinduism, and put an end to the ancient Vedic traditions. And he did whatever he could to do that. Francis Xavier was especially vicious towards the Brahmanas, and once said if there were no Brahmanas in the area, all Hindus would accept conversion to our faith. (From *Atrocities on Hindus by Missionaries in Goa*, by V. Sundaram)

Xavier, who was made a saint by the Church for his activities, boasted of having destroyed "hundreds of Hindu temples" by himself, and "miraculously" converted people by the thousands. But how miraculous this was can be seen in the following descriptions:

M. D. David, author of *Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity*, writes: "...A particularly grave abuse was practiced in Goa in the form of 'mass baptism' and what went before it. The practice was begun by the Jesuits and was initiated by the Franciscans also. The Jesuits staged an annual mass baptism on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25), and in order to secure as many neophytes as possible, a few days before the ceremony the Jesuits would go through the streets of the Hindu quarter in pairs, accompanied by their Negro slaves, whom they would urge to seize the Hindus. When the blacks caught up a fugitive, they would smear his lips with a piece of beef, making him an 'untouchable' among his people. Conversion to Christianity was then his only option."

Others found conversion politically useful, like the fishermen of Tamil Nadu who sold their souls to Christian priests in exchange for the protection of the Portuguese army against their Muslim neighbors. However, the deal was not completely voluntary. Those fishermen who refused to convert were attacked on the Malabar coast by the Portuguese navy. Entire fishing boats were set ablaze, as their women and children helplessly watched from the shores. Those fishermen who jumped into the water to save their lives, were either bayoneted or shot dead.

To fuel hatred of the newly converted Christians against the Hindus, the Portuguese would spread many false stories. One referred to Thomas the apostle, who was said to have landed in India in 52 CE at Cranganore on the Malabar coast and established the first church later known as the Syrian Church. In 68 CE, St. Thomas was allegedly martyred near modern day Chennai (Madras) and a large cathedral there now is said to house a basement crypt containing the relics of St. Thomas. However, there is controversy with evidence that St. Thomas never went there. Also, in the cathedral of St. Thomas at Chennai (San Thome Cathedral Basilica) there is also a painting that shows Thomas praying while he is being stabbed to death with a lance by a Ramanuja Vaishnava Brahmana wearing Vishnu *tilak* (forehead mark). It is interesting to remember that the Shree Vaishnavas and their *tilak* did not come into history until the 11th century, almost 1000 years later. Therefore, this shows the deceitfulness in their stories and conversion tactics. There was little if any conversions based on the purity of their teachings, but they instead had to rely on spreading lies and treachery, and even savagery to make converts to their religion, as we will soon see.

At least from 1540 onwards the Portuguese destroyed all the Hindu temples in the area, over 300 of them, and stopped all Hindu worship and even the popular traditions that were not directly connected with the religion. From studies by Dr. K. V. Paliwal, President of the Hindu Writers' Forum in New Delhi, as presented in his book, *Atrocities on Hindus by Christian Missionaries in Goa*, many of the churches that were built in Goa were constructed on top of the remains of Hindu temples that were destroyed by the Portuguese.

It was in 1560 that the King of Portugal sent the first inquisitors to India after the request of the preacher and Hindu hater Francis Xavier. This was the start of the compassionate and merciful Goan Inquisition that tortured and killed many thousands of Indians who merely followed the traditions of their culture. This was the real change in the presence of the Portuguese when, being intolerant in religion, they introduced the Inquisition with all its horrors. "Inquisition" was the Court established by the Catholic government for search of and for punishing heretics. This justification for cruelty, mercilessness, and corruption was called the "Holy Office". It had been established in Spain in 1481 and in Portugal in 1541. Thus, it was set up in Goa in 1560 through 1774, and 1778 to 1812. This was regarded as barbaric and totally cruel and unjust from the Indian standpoint. And it was not only directed at Hindus, but also in

their rough handling of Syrian Christians of Malabar to secure their submission to the Catholic faith.

The laws enforced by the Inquisition in 1560 were many and demanded such things as the prohibition of the use of Indian musical instruments and Indian songs during marriage ceremonies, the use of betel and pan, and the distribution of food to poor people in honor of some deceased person. Other prohibitions concerned the harvest festivals, cooking rice without salt, fasting on the holydays, on Wednesdays, full moon and new moon, or bathing before entering the kitchen for preparing the meals. They also ordered all the coconut trees and tulasi plants to be uprooted from all gardens. All those who disobeyed the orders of the Inquisition were subject to horrible punishments. More than 2,000 people were burned alive, and many more tortured.

Over time they established many more laws to stifle the Hindu population of the area in many ways. For example, in June of 1557, the King D. Joao ordered that no Government Official should utilize the services of the Brahmanas or other infidels and contrary to this, the Official will lose his job and the Brahmana will become captive and lose all property. All jobs must be given to Christians and not to Hindus. This was to make the Hindus completely helpless and, more or less, slaves.

On April 2, 1560, the Viceroy ordered that the Brahmanas should be thrown out of the island of Goa and the lands and fortresses of the King of Portugal. On November 27, 1563, a law was passed to the effect that all Hindu physicians, carpenters, blacksmiths, and shop keepers were asked to sell their property and leave the Portuguese territory. On April 3, 1582, a Royal Decree was re-issued that no Hindu, regardless of his status or condition, should hold any public office. All Christian officials were forbidden from utilizing the services of any Brahmanas or Hindus. Later, on March 13, 1613, and again on January 31, 1620, laws were enacted to impose a ban on the performance of all Hindu rites and ceremonies, including marriages.

Additional demands included that all Hindus were obliged to assemble periodically in churches to be lectured by the priests about the inferiority of their religion. The poor could not be fed nor ceremonial meals distributed for the peace of the souls of the dead. No rituals could be performed on the 12th day after a person's death, or on moonless or full moon days. There could be no fasting on the Ekadashi days. Hindu men could not wear dhotis, even in their own homes. And women could not wear cholis. However, Hindus embracing Christianity would be exempt from land taxes for up to 15 years. But no one should bear any

Hindu names. A most blatant abuse of power by the clergy was the order that all orphans could be baptized as Christians, which lead to the kidnapping of numerous orphans, and the establishment of many Christian orphanages.

Various repressive measures were also adopted to suppress the knowledge of Vedic Dharma and the culture of Hindus, and exterminate the indigenous literature in Marathi, Konkani, or any local dialect. Special officers known as *Qualificadores* were appointed to examine the books published by the Hindus before they were printed, and care was taken to see that they contained nothing against the Catholic Faith. A list of prohibited Hindu books was maintained. According to the Holy Inquisition Manual, it was a crime to possess and read the prohibited books. All Sanskrit and Marathi books, whatever may be their subject matter, were seized and burnt on the suspicion that they might deal with what they called idolatry.

So much harassment was felt by the Hindus that they abandoned the city in large numbers, refusing to stay in a place where they had no freedom, and were liable to be imprisoned, tortured, or put to death for worshiping according to their ancient tradition.

The Hindus of Goa were shocked to see that the God of Christianity was more cruel than the God of Islam, or the dictates of Mohammad. Thus, deserting Goa for the lands of the Muslims seemed a brighter future, though they had received nothing but trouble from the Muslims.

After all this, an order was issued in June of 1684 that eliminated the Konkani language, and for dealing toughly with anyone who still spoke the local language. It was compulsory to speak Portuguese only. All symbols of non-Christian sects were destroyed and all books in the local languages were burnt. The Archbishop living on the banks of the Ethora said in a lecture that, “The post of Inquiry Commission in Goa is regarded as holy.” Thus, the Indian ladies who opposed or resisted the sexual advances of the assistants of the commission were put behind bars and then forcibly used by them to satisfy their carnal desires. Then they were burnt alive as opponents or heretics of the established tenets of the Catholic Church. So harsh and notorious was the inquisition in Goa that word of its brutality and horrors reached Lisbon, but nothing was done to stop its increasing barbarity. Those who were fortunate got away with being banished from Portuguese territory. The less fortunate had their property seized and auctioned, the money used for furthering the conversion processes of the Church. And the least fortunate were

brutalized and killed, or forced into slave labor in the galleys of the ships that transported loot from India to the Portuguese coffers.

The Goan inquisition is regarded as the most violent ever executed by the Portuguese Catholic Church. It was basically a holocaust inflicted on the Indian people. The inquisition consisted of a tribunal, headed by a judge sent from Portugal, along with two assistants or henchmen. The judge was answerable to no one but Lisbon, and handed down judgments in whatever way he saw fit. The inquisition was conducted in a palace called the "Big House." This had been the residence of the Portuguese Governors of Goa until 1554. This had been refitted to accommodate 200 cells for prisoners, and instruments of torture to inflict all kinds of pain on the "heathens and pagans," Hindus, and force "the true and merciful religion" of Christianity on those who resisted it. All interrogations were conducted behind closed doors, but the screams of agony of the men, women, and children could be heard from the streets, even in the middle of the night, as they would be brutally flogged, beaten, burned, or even slowly dismembered in front of their relatives.

Since the prisoners of the "Big House" were separated from one another, it took only four guards to oversee them. Those who died in the jail were buried there, only to be later exhumed and taken with the prisoners condemned to death to be burnt during the next *auto da fe*, which was a ritual fire held by the priests to burn all things considered sacrilegious. The prisoners were kept in silence, and anyone who complained, or even prayed to God loudly, ran the risk of being whipped by the guards.

Prisoners were brought in after witnesses had reported on them of crimes they had purportedly committed, often times with the witness implicating innocent people while under the threat of torture, or to save their own lives. These so-called crimes were often some kind of blasphemy against Christianity, or impiety, idolatry, necromancy and witchcraft, or anything against Christianity. For these "crimes" they would often be burnt alive at the stake, but only after much torture. If they confessed to their crimes, they were shown Christian mercy by being killed first by strangulation, and then burnt after death. These torture sessions were also efficiently watched by Christian priests.

What verifies this history is the recorded orders issued by a succession of Portuguese Viceroys and Governors, as well as the prosecutors of that time, which give details of the horrors committed in the name of Jesus Christ.

Some of the tortures included having your arms tied behind your back and being strung up by your wrists. You would hang there for hours, only to be suddenly dropped down near the floor, which would quickly pull your arms back to dislocate them out of the joints. There was also the water torture in which you are forced to lay across an iron bar and ingest water without stopping, causing the iron bar to break one's vertebrae and cause vomiting and asphyxia. Sometimes in that condition the stomach would be beaten with sticks so badly when filled with water, the stomach itself would burst. Torture by fire was being hung over a fire to be roasted alive with your feet coated with animal fat which would ignite and burn the feet. All these were done until the victim confessed. Then they would be taken to their cell to suffer until it was time for their execution.

Other instruments included a metallic glove in which the hand would be roasted over a fire, and other tools for breaking one's legs and shins, disemboweling a person on the rack, sharp knives for cutting the ears off of one's head, or instruments that would tear a woman's breast from her body, and so on. All such being the ways to taste the mercy of Christianity and feel remorse for not having converted. (From *Atrocities on Hindus by Missionaries in Goa*, by V. Sundaram)

Also, the famous writer of the 19th century, Alexandre Herculano, wrote in his book, *Fragment About the Inquisition*, how no one was excused from the tortures of the Inquisition: "… the terrors inflicted on pregnant women made them abort… Neither the beauty or decorousness of the flower of youth, nor the old age, so worthy of compassion in a woman, exempted the weaker sex from the brutal ferocity of the supposed defenders of the religion… There were days when seven or eight were submitted torture."

Paul William Roberts, in *Empire of the Soul, Some Journeys in India*, writes about the methods of the Portuguese Inquisition: "Children were flogged and slowly dismembered in front of their parents whose eyelids had been sliced off to make sure they missed nothing. Extremities were amputated carefully, so that a person could remain conscious even when all that remained was a torso and a head... Those subjected to other diabolical tortures could also be counted in the thousands and the abominations continued until a brief respite in 1774... The evil resumed, continuing, almost incredibly, until June 16, 1812. At that point, British pressure put an end to terror (with) the presence of British troops stationed in Goa."

It was the British who put pressure to end the terror of the Inquisition, and the British troops in Goa enforced it. The palace of the

Grand Inquisitor, called the "Big House," was demolished and no trace of it remains today, which might remind someone of the inquisition and the tortures that went on inside, which had originally been requested by "Saint" Francis Xavier.

The alarm caused by news of the Goan inquisition reached Lisbon, where the Archbishop of Evora at the Cathedral church in Lisbon said in his oration in June of 1897: "The Inquisition was an infamous tribunal at all places. But the infamy never reached greater depths, nor was more vile, more black, and more completely determined by mundane interests than at the Tribunal of Goa, by irony called the Holy Office. Here the inquisitors went to the length of imprisoning in its jails women who resisted their advances, and after having satisfied their bestial instincts there, ordering that they be burnt as heretics." (From *The Hindus and the Portuguese Republic*, Priolkar, pp174-175)

Dr. Trasta Breganka Kunha, a Catholic citizen of Goa, had written: "In spite of all the mutilations and concealment of history, it remains an undoubted fact that religious conversion of Goans is due to methods of force by the Portuguese to establish their rule. As a result of this violence the character of our people was destroyed. The propagation of Christian sect in Goa came about not by religious preaching but through methods of violence and pressure. If any evidence is needed for this fact, we can obtain it through law books, orders and reports of the local rulers of that time and also from the most dependable documents of the Christian sect."

From all this we can plainly see that the Goan Inquisition by the Portuguese Catholic Church was nothing less than a sustained war against Hindus and the Vedic culture itself. Nonetheless, they could not see the demise of Vedic Dharma. Presently, there may be few references in modern or school history books to the violent and treacherous ways that the Catholics used in their attempt to destroy and triumph over the Vedic tradition of India, and though this silence is maintained by secular historians, the history of it still exists for us all to remember, and to honor the lives of all those men, women, and children who, under the threat of torture and death, refused to give up their culture. Just as the Jews say in regard to their own holocaust, this chapter of Indian history should not be forgotten in order to make sure that it never happens again, and so we do not forget the value of the Vedic traditions and Dharmic culture that adds to the profound history of India and the high caliber of character of its people.

Looking back at the history of the church, the Vatican has apologized for the agony inflicted on Galileo, who was right all along.

Thus, we can access that it is time that the Vatican also convey its apology for the Goan Inquisition. In fact, should they not give some reparation for all of the damage they did and the horrors they inflicted on so many people? Nobody knows exactly how many citizens were killed or tortured by the Portuguese in the name of Christ, but it would be likely to run into hundreds of thousands.

* * *

After reviewing how much cruelty Christians have used to establish their religion, or even force it on others in all parts of the world, is there much wonder why some people like Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) observed, "Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards humanity. What has been the effect of coercion?" Or why the Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) commented, "When I think of all the harm the Bible has done, I despair of ever writing anything to equal it." Even Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*: "I had started disliking Christianity. This was not without any reason. Those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the High School in Rajkot and used disgraceful words against the Hindus and their Gods/Goddesses. I could not bear this."

In fact, not only Gandhi, but no self-respecting or decent human being can bear to hear about the atrocities committed in the name of Christianity. For anyone to allow, encourage, implement, or condone such cruel and brutal treatment of others is surely a sign of insanity. What kind of religion could this ever be when such violence and cruelty could be allowed or endorsed for its cause as we find in the Goan Inquisition? And still, the techniques used by Christians as observed by Mahatma Gandhi remain an important method of their preaching and conversion work to this day.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Real Intention of the British in India

Many people may say that there is much to be thankful for about the presence of the British in colonial India. But there are different ways to view that. There are certain advantages that took place. But regardless of what advancements that some people may claim was brought by the British, we also cannot deny their real intention, which was for their own benefit above all else. Otherwise, why would they have even been in India?

Sure we can say that the British built the railroads, which helped unify India, but also required the removal of vast numbers of trees and even farmland, which also allowed the British to more efficiently gather India's resources to send to England. We have to remember that this was in the interest of Britain. The trade between India and Britain was unfair from the beginning. For example, the exports in the early 1800s of Indian cotton and silk goods faced duties of 70-80%. While the British imports into India had duties of only 2-4%. Thus, the British imports of cotton into India increased by as much as 50 times, and the Indian exports dropped to only one-fourth. This was also seen in the other areas of Indian industry, such as in silk goods, woollens, iron, pottery, glassware, and paper. This resulted in the ruination of millions of Indian artists, craftsmen, weavers, potters, etc., who then had no job but to become landless agricultural workers.

There also those who try to credit the British with bringing modern medicine to India. Yet all the statistical indicators show that access to modern medicine was severely restricted. A 1938 report by the ILO (International Labor Office) on "Industrial Labor in India" revealed that life expectancy in India was barely 25 years in 1921 (compared to 55 for England) and had actually fallen to 23 in 1931! In his recently published *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Mike Davis reports that life expectancy for Indians under the British fell by 20% between 1872 and 1921.

The British are also credited with building the water canals for agricultural development and transportation. The postal system and the roads were also developed. But again, these were mostly for a better administration for the British with little regard for the well-being of the local people. For example, as noted in 1838 (by G. Thompson, in *India and the Colonies*) many of the roads and canals were so dilapidated, that portions of them simply could not be used because of the build up of silt. This lack of water supply and irrigation resulted in serious famines across the land. Montgomery Martin, as reported in his work *The Indian Empire*, in 1858, noted that the old East India Company "omitted not only to initiate improvements, but even to keep in repair the old works upon which the revenue depended." Plus, with the lack of means to transport produce and other goods through the canals, economic life was greatly hindered.

Famines and scarcities had increased by four times in the last thirty years of the 19th century, compared to a hundred years earlier, as reported by W. Digny in *Prosperous British India* in 1901. In *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Mike Davis reports that there were 31 serious famines in 120 years of British rule while there were only 17 in the 2000 years before the British. Particularly cruel was the fact that even in the worst famines, the British continued to ship food grains back to England, ignoring the plight of the local Indians. While the traveler Mr. Tavernier, in his *Travels in India*, reports that in the 17th century, "Even in the smallest villages rice, flour, butter, milk, beans and other vegetables, sugar and sweetmeats can be procured in abundance..."

There was also the start of the British form of education, which some people give credit to the British for doing. However, in British India as late as 1911, literacy was only 6%. In 1931 it grew to only 8%. By 1947 it had managed to reach 11%.

Furthermore, in time, under the British and its educational system, it was only the British diplomas that were recognized to obtain a job, and English was the sole language for university teaching, which people had to learn if they were going to go to those institutions. Thus, all Indians who wanted to advance in British India had to have an English education, which also molded them to dislike and grow away from their own Indian roots and Vedic traditions. Through this process, the standard and ancient establishments for Vedic culture and higher learning were neglected and lost respect, and fell into disuse. This was one of the goals of the British, to make the Indian people attracted to the English lifestyle by taste and by their own preference, and force them to give up their ancient traditions.

The way the English attempted to ruin the Vedic Aryan civilization, and to demean Indian culture, even to the point of trying to make its own people hate everything that is Indian, is explained in *World-Wide Hindu Culture* (pp.165-6) by Dr. S. Venu Gopalacharya. He describes that on July 3, 1835, Lord Macaulay suggested that the only statesmanship of the Britishers to establish permanent imperialist sovereignty over their richest colony, India, was to make the Indians "Englishmen by Taste." This was to be accomplished through "English Education," similar to bringing under control hundreds of elephants by taming a couple of wild elephants. By 1854, when the whole of India came under British rule, Charles Woodraffe, the Director of the Education Department of the Government of India, in his minutes dated July 19, 1854, stated that it was the best opportunity to give effect to Lord Macaulay's suggestion. For getting grains for one year, sowing of corn is necessary; for getting fruits, trees are to be planted. Likewise, to get perennial or permanent service, human beings are to be sown. For erasing illiteracy, primary schools are to be opened. To get officials with less expenditure, secondary education is essential because importing Englishmen for that purpose is impossible. Colleges with English education is unavoidable to make the Indian educated class detest everything Indian, to make them look at it as nothing more than mean and illogical superstitions.

Macaulay's prophecy worked well, both to rule and impoverish the English educated class of Indians as well as their blind followers, the laymen of British India. The factory-made goods of the Britishers found a very good market, and one by one all the handicrafts and home industries lost their charm among the Indians. As the English factories were helped to get raw materials from India at the lowest rates and supply factory-made articles to the Indian consumers, all the home industries of the Indians became extinct within a couple of decades, not being able to compete with them. As English became the official language replacing Sanskrit, some of the educated class started to learn English to earn their living. All those who could not continue their hereditary occupations and learn English became jobless and miserably poor.

This was certainly more subtle than the techniques of the Muslims who would force people to convert at the point of a sword, and then kill everyone who did not convert, and then burn all the temples. The British did not resort to such methods. But their ultimate purpose was similar. The British still raped and pillaged India for what they wanted out of her. There are still reminders of the British that have

lingered in India, such as the government bureaucracy that remains as the seeds for so much corruption. Another reminder are the thousands of art treasures, jewels, paintings, antique and priceless images, etc., that once belonged to India that now reside in England or elsewhere if you wish to see them, such as the Hope Diamond, mined from the Kollur mine near Guntur, India, and said to have been stolen from a deity of Sita, wife of Lord Rama, from within a Vedic temple.

Furthermore, the British attitude toward the great monuments of India was no better. If they could use them for their own purposes, then why not? Yet, today they have the reputation of having preserved the great architecture of India. However, research has shown the real attitude was much different. For example, David Carroll, in his publication *Taj Mahal*, related that, "The forts in Agra and Delhi were commandeered at the beginning of the nineteenth century and turned into military garrisons. Marble reliefs were torn down, gardens were trampled, and lines of ugly barracks, still standing today, were installed in their stead. In the Delhi fort, the Hall of Public Audience was made into an arsenal and the arches of the outer colonnades were bricked over or replaced with rectangular wooden windows."

Even the Taj Mahal was not spared. David Carroll reports: "By the nineteenth century, its grounds were a favorite trysting place for young Englishmen and their ladies. Open-air balls were held on the marble terrace in front of the main door, and there, beneath Shah Jahan's lotus dome, brass bands um-pah-pahed and lords and ladies danced the quadrille. The minarets became a popular site for suicide leaps, and the mosques on either side of the Taj were rented out as bungalows to honeymooners. The gardens of the Taj were especially popular for open-air frolics..."

"At an earlier date, when picnic parties were held in the garden of the Taj, related Lord Curzon, a governor general in the early twentieth century, 'it was not an uncommon thing for the revelers to arm themselves with hammer and chisel, with which they wiled away the afternoon by chipping out fragments of agate and carnelian from the cenotaphs of the Emperor and his lamented Queen.'" I find this particularly fascinating because once while touring the Taj Mahal, I was told that early thieves would come to try to take the semiprecious stone inlays from the walls of the Taj, but now, with this extra research, I learn that it was the British themselves.

However, this is not all. Lord William Bentinck (governor general of Bengal 1828-33, and later first governor general of all India) went so far as to announce plans to demolish the best Mogul monuments

in Agra and Delhi and remove their marble facades. These were to be shipped to London, where they would be broken up and sold to members of the British aristocracy. Plans to dismantle the Taj Mahal were also in place, and wrecking machinery to dismantle the Taj had already been moved into the garden grounds. Just as the demolition work was to begin, news from London indicated that the first auction had not been a success, and that all further sales were cancelled – it would not be worth the money to tear down the Taj Mahal. Thus, the Taj Mahal was spared and so too was the false reputation of the British as "Protectors of India's Historic Legacy"! That innumerable other monuments were destroyed, or left to rack and ruin, is a story that has yet to get beyond the specialists in the field.

So the fact of the matter, regardless of what the British seemed to have done for India, they still tried to destroy Indian culture. From as far back as 1600 when the East India Company received its charter from Queen Elizabeth, their tactics amounted to varying degrees of exploitation of the people, treacherous methods to demean the culture itself, and even repression and plain savagery. Parts of this we can review in the chapter on India's Historical Episodes.

THE MISSIONARIES

In the beginning there may have been some attempts for the British to try and understand the Indian culture, but all such attempts were brought to an end with the mutiny of 1857. After that, the British administration was concerned mostly with control of all aspects of India and its people in whatever way it wanted, even if it meant murder and violence. The British used their divide and conquer techniques and were responsible for heightening whatever friction there was between the people of India, and in dividing them among its castes, and between Muslims and Hindus.

One of the ways this was done was with the missionaries that came with the British. At first there were restrictions on what the missionaries could do, as implemented by the East India Company. But in time the missionaries began to push for conversions of all people, especially targeting the tribals, the *adivasis*, or the "original residents of India," telling them that they had been and were suppressed by the upper caste Brahmanas who arrived during the falsely conjectured "Aryan Invasion." They were told that they could be freed from this suppression by converting to Christianity, as if the West was bringing the light of

civilization to those who lived in darkness. They worked in a way to make the people hate their own culture, cutting them off from their own roots. Thus, friction was ignited and has continued to this day, based on this propaganda. That is why in the Northeast regions, or even in Kerala, the people have considered the idea to break away from India and become separate countries: Another chipping away at the motherland of India. This is but some of the remnants of the British. It is obvious that few of the dominating British really understood the greatness of the ancient Vedic civilization, who considered the people of India base and degenerate. But as we review some of the things that the British did to the people, we can only reconsider who was actually the most base and cruel.

The general attitude of the British toward Hindus was described in the dairy of Lord Hastings, Governor General of India from 1813, entered on October 2nd of that year: "The Hindoo appears a being nearly limited to mere animal functions… with no higher intellect than a dog or an elephant, or a monkey." And this is about the people who gave the world the profound and deep Vedic literature, the earliest of any philosophical and spiritual writing! The missionaries were certainly arrogant and felt that they were divinely ordained for a mission to eliminate heathenism, Hinduism, from the face of India.

Let us not forget that some of the missionaries took great pleasure in knocking down and defiling the deities in the Vedic temples, and even tearing down the temples to build churches, especially Francis Xavier who worked hard in this direction. And even now while traveling around India you will find so many Christian schools named after Francis Xavier, as if regarding his so-called saintliness without admitting his vicious nature and wicked deeds toward Hindus. Their activities were not dissimilar than the previous Islamic invaders, but who were more ruthless.

KEEPING INDIANS IN POVERTY

Other techniques of control by the British were to keep Indians poverty stricken, and, thus, not allow them the means or energy to rise up against them, and to own all of the big commercial companies and not promote the industrial development of India. This is one of the reasons why it is not surprising to see India presently becoming a huge financial influence in the world. It has always been a great country, but only needed to become free from the influences that held her back. Now that it

is independent, the country has full facility to reach its true potential, if only the politicians guide her properly without all the corruption that will misdirect her assets and talents.

DEMEANING THE VEDIC LITERATURE

Another thing the British did was to misrepresent the Vedic tradition and demean it in the worst possible way. This, along with enforcing the British educational system, made the general mass of people begin to lose their national awareness and pride. They no longer recognized that the welfare of India is to their own benefit, their own upliftment and positive future. The destruction to India and its culture, whether brought by the British, the Muslims, or anyone else, is but their own destruction. When this happens, as it began under the invaders of India, the people become self-centered and corruption sets in. The higher and more spiritual Vedic values become lost, and the nation exhibits the characteristics of disunity, untruth, confusion, chaos, and quarrel. This tends to increase in India with each new generation, all because they are losing their culture. Though some of the national pride of Indians has returned regarding their country and their Vedic tradition, which, for example, has brought the highest teachings of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, still much of India's cultural heritage has slipped away.

The British also destroyed or collected all the Sanskrit books that they could find. These included numerous local historical records of the various kingdoms throughout India, and also the important Puranic and Vedic literature. You could find many of these editions in the great library of the East India Company. With the destruction of many of these local history books, the British could then fabricate a false history that justified whatever account of the past they wanted to provide, such as the date of the compositions of the Vedic texts, the dates of the archeological finds, the later times of the Harrapan or Indus civilization, and so on. Thus, the fact that the Mahabharata War happened as early as 3139 BCE would be another item of history not easily known, and, thus, it would make it easier to convince people that the great epics, such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and other texts, were but fables and myths. This was but another method to demean the Vedic tradition. And even now, those who are educated in English schools unknowingly called these texts myths and legends, which gives the subtle meaning that such books are but folktales with little substance or truth.

Another thing that was done was that they not only collected the Sanskrit texts, but also began changing portions of them, such as with H. H. Wilson's translation of the *Vishnu Purana*. Even some of the Indian writers and scholars were also mislead by this process. Then, once particular changes were made or passages and verses were added, often to the effect of reducing the good qualities of some of the main personalities in the books, the original texts would be destroyed. Then they would publish the new editions and control the distribution of them. Other portions of manuscripts, such as those that describe certain rituals, can be complete fabrications, thus misleading people in what would have been the strict codes of conduct or the rituals that were to be performed. That is also why you can hardly find any Sanskrit texts in India that are published before 200 years ago, especially amongst the *Srmiti* literature. Such books that we may find today can indeed mislead people in understanding the lofty nature that they once possessed.

Further evidence of this is supplied through a suggestion made by William Jones to Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India, that one of the ways to destroy the faith of the Indian people in the Vedic texts was by manufacturing a Sanskrit scripture that would elaborate on the glories of Jesus, as if it was part of the Vedic tradition. Another idea was to translate one of the biblical Gospels and the prophetic book of Isaiah into Sanskrit in the style of an ancient Vedic text, and put in it false prophecies about Jesus to mislead people. The next step would be to distribute them in the British educational institutions to give them more credibility. This would provide the means to further distract people away from the true Vedic traditions and towards Christianity. This shows the deceitful means that they considered and used to try to bring an end to the true nature of the Vedic culture and bring the people under the control of their own religion. The British had to resort to such ideas because they knew that Christianity on its own was not really attracting the people to something higher than what they already had in their Vedic tradition.

THE REAL GOOD THAT CAME FROM BRITISH INDIA

If there is any real good that came from the British in India, it was the spread of interest in the Indian Vedic customs and spiritual knowledge, especially back in Europe. The English language was one of the greatest facilitators for this to happen. Those who had the most curiosity about the Vedic philosophy wanted to learn Sanskrit, but for

others it was through translations, particularly in the English language that the appeal of the lofty nature of the Vedic literature started to expand.

Furthermore, the use of English facilitated the Indians to negotiate with the British colonial masters in their own language how best and how soon they should give up their holdings on India. English also became a common language between Indians from various parts of the country, who would otherwise be limited by whatever regional dialect or language that was prominent in their own region. Thus, in a way, it helped unify India.

We can appreciate the railroads, the postal system, the roads, etc., that the British established. But because of the English language the world was finally able to see the elevated and profound nature of its Vedic literature and culture. So many works were translated into English, especially texts like *Bhagavad-gita*, which drew much attention to its philosophy and spiritual insights. And now most of the Western world has been able to more efficiently take up the study of yoga, meditation, pranayama, mantras, Ayurveda (holistic health), Jyotish (Vedic astrology), Vastu (holistic home arrangement), and other topics from the Vedic texts, such as the logic of vegetarianism, that otherwise would have taken much longer to accomplish and spread.

The benefit of this was also for Indian nationals who have come to the English speaking countries. But more so is the support that Vedic culture presently receives from the West, which is becoming increasingly interested in what India has to offer. The way things are going is that there is more freedom to practice Hinduism in America than in India. Thus, there may come a time when we must transport Vedic culture back to India from the West. I would rather not see that, since so many Westerners travel or hope to travel to India to heighten their spiritual consciousness. Many Indians do not realize this. And there are an increasing number of magazines on the newsstand in Western countries that teach or promote the Eastern spiritual teachings, especially yoga, Ayurveda, Vastu, Jyotish, and, of course, the Vedic spiritual philosophy.

So we can see there is a natural curiosity and appetite for this higher spiritual philosophy that people of the West want. And the source of it is primarily India. Therefore, we must keep India as the homeland of a dynamic and thriving Vedic tradition. The support for this from the West can certainly help make sure that this happens. And the English language is the tool that makes this more possible than any other thing.

INTEREST IN ANCIENT INDIAN TRADITIONS IN EUROPE

In spite of the demeaning treatment the people in India had to endure under the British, there was an increasing respect for the culture and its literature that was filtering out of India. There was a genuine interest in the ancient traditions of India, which spread rapidly amongst the intellectuals in Europe. In 1795, the government of the French Republic established the Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes for the study of oriental languages. In 1814, the College de France established the first chair in Sanskrit. Then Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), a French scholar, first translated four *Upanishads* from Persian, and then later translated and published fifty *Upanishads* from Sanskrit. The German Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) learned Sanskrit from Alexander Hamilton in France. It was the Schlegel brothers who helped establish Sanskrit professorships in German universities.

In England, the East India Company's training college at Hertford taught Sanskrit. The first chair was at Oxford in 1832 which was held by Horace H. Wilson of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Thereafter, other universities also established chairs in Sanskrit studies. There was also the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from which grew three more societies in India, and others in Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

The work of others, such as Henry Colebrooke, Charles Wilkins, James Princep, and Alexander Cunningham, brought many more Sanskrit texts to the attention of other European scholars. Professor Monier Williams established Oxford's learning center on India. And Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* went into sixty English and eighty American editions over twenty years, which greatly helped introduce the ancient culture and spiritual traditions of India to the Western world.

However, some of the translations that were produced by these various scholars, though they have provided a glimpse into the wisdom that the Sanskrit books held, were actually fraught with misconceptions, maybe not intentionally, but simply because of a lack of understanding, which also affected the translations. In the Vedic traditions, disciples always learn the spiritual science from a master so they understand it properly. But Western scholars took it upon themselves to learn Sanskrit and translate it without the use of gurus or spiritual masters to genuinely understand the spiritual philosophy. Thus, so many mistakes are there in these early translations. Nonetheless, they helped serve the purpose of stirring the curiosity and respect for the high philosophy that India had to

offer, and also assist in making way for the more accurate renditions of the Vedic texts that have become increasingly available today.

Of course, the most famous of the English Sanskrit scholars of ancient India studies was the German Max Muller (1823-1900). He edited the *Rig-Veda* in English and helped produce the 51 volumes of *The Sacred Books of the East*, published through Oxford between 1879 and 1910. However, he was often assisted financially by the East Indian Company, and later by the India Office. Thus, he had his own agenda for learning and translating Sanskrit texts. Max Muller's ultimate goal was outlined in a letter to his wife in 1866, wherein he wrote about his translation of the *Rig-veda*: "This edition of mine and the translation of the *Veda*, will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years." (*The Life and Letters of Right Honorable Friedrich Max Muller*, Vol. I. p.346)

Unfortunately, such things as the Aryan invasion theory was created to make it appear that Indian culture and philosophy was dependent on the previous developments in Europe, thereby justifying the need for colonial rule and Christian expansion in India. This was also the purpose of the study of Sanskrit, such as at Oxford University in England, as indicated by Colonel Boden who sponsored the program. He stated that they should "promote Sanskrit learning among the English, so as 'to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion.'" Fortunately, not everyone was so convinced of this and did indeed look more seriously into the wisdom of the Vedic philosophy.

HOW EUROPEAN INTEREST IN HINDUISM CAME BACK TO INDIA THROUGH GANDHI

In India, the Christian missionaries were not having much success in attracting Hindus to Christianity. But back in Europe, an increasing number of people were fascinated by the Vedic spiritual knowledge and traditions. They wanted genuine Eastern knowledge, much of which was at times incorporated into the debates they had regarding religion, science, history, and ethics. Vedic culture itself seemed to shake the self-centeredness of Europe's society.

Even though much of the Christian writing about India was completely distorted and downplayed by its bigotry, nonetheless, many of those who traveled through India during the 17th century examined Indian culture with fair and open mindedness. Such views were able to penetrate to the general European population.

It was due to the influential ideas that came from India that gave rise to particular individuals who became convinced of the humanitarian, ethical, and health benefits of vegetarianism. Most if not all of the major vegetarian groups that had formed were affected by the vegetarian diet and philosophy of respect for animals found in Hinduism. This went on for 300 years until the late 19th century. By then, the busy streets of London had several vegetarian restaurants.

It was during this time, in 1888, an Indian man from Gujarat came to London to study law, and came across the group known as the Vegetarian Society. It was Mohandas K. Gandhi, having been brought up a strict vegetarian of Vaishnava Hinduism, who thus became convinced of the vegetarian movement after being exposed to the way the Hindu tenets were incorporated and taught by these Westerners. Furthermore, Gandhi realized how to import this kind of vegetarianism back to India to use as a part of the freedom struggle against British rule.

At the time there was a view in India that vegetarianism and the principles of *ahimsa* or nonviolence made Indians weak and feeble, thus unable to defend themselves properly from the British. Gandhi became influenced by this and began to think along these same lines of giving up vegetarianism. In fact, when he went to London, having promised his mother that he would not adopt the carnivorous habits of the British, he found it difficult to live on boiled, unspiced vegetables that he prepared himself. It was his landlady that saved him by letting him know about the vegetarian restaurants in town where he could get a cheap dinner. It was at such a restaurant where he first saw and later read such books as Howard Williams' *The Ethics of Diet*, Dr. Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet*, and other books, such as by Dr. Allinson. One writer in particular that affected him was Henry Salt and his *Vindication of Natural Diet*, and books about the non-violent, radical protest as presented by Percy Shelley, which was influenced by Hinduism. This created some strong realizations in Gandhi, which made him understand the strength and utility of vegetarianism again, all because of the new emphasis and reasoning propounded by these Westerners.

This is not dissimilar to the way Indians today look toward and admire so many things from the West, until they realize how much the West looks towards India for much of its spiritual inspiration. Then the

Indians begin to feel prouder of their own culture and begin to take it more seriously again. This is what happened to Gandhi, and now he had more force to bring back to India in his cause against the British. It is almost as if the English, having been influenced by Vedic India, gave Gandhi the very thing he needed to help solidify his ability to fight against the British rule in India. In this way, vegetarianism became a symbol of the resistance against the British and the Western values of materialism, which was but a lifestyle of selfish spoiled habits, destruction and waste, and epitomized by the slaughter and consumption of innocent animals such as cows, one of the most useful and respected animals in India.

Now Gandhi became a vegetarian by free choice rather than the limitations of a vow. The spread of vegetarianism also became a part of his mission. Some of his first articles were for the journals of the Vegetarian Society, for which he soon became an executive on the committee. He also started his own vegetarian club with Edwin Arnold serving as Vice President. In this new circle of friends, he met people like George Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant, and Henry Salt, along with others who were socialists and critics of imperialism. It was also in England where Gandhi first became seriously interested in the Vedic scriptures while influenced by the Theosophical Society, of which Annie Besant was a prominent member.

It was later in South Africa where he met Albert West and Henry Polak during a dinner at a Johannesburg vegetarian restaurant. It was with them that he founded his rural vegetarian communes (Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm). It was also with such vegetarians when Gandhi developed the ideas for his *satyagraha* movement, which was started for fighting for the rights of Asians in South Africa, and which he took with him to India to use in his campaign against the British. Thus, vegetarianism and the Western view of Hinduism that he was exposed to changed him greatly, and made him more confident of what his purpose in life was meant to be.

HISTORICAL INCIDENTS OF THE BRITISH IN INDIA

As we discussed the real intents of the British, there are also some important historical incidents in the history of the British in India which should not be forgotten, especially with each passing generation of Indian youth that becomes more distant from the past in which these episodes took place. Again, as I have said, this is not meant to reawaken

old hatreds or the like, but to remember the numerous sacrifices that the Indian people underwent in order to defend their land, their country, and most importantly their Vedic culture and Dharma. Without these many sacrifices, even up to giving one's life, India would not be what it is today, and we certainly would not be able to follow the ancient traditions of Indian culture that are still alive and practiced not only in India, but in most parts of the world. This also means that we should not take this lightly or cheaply, thinking that this is not important, or that we should now give up the determination to maintain the Vedic traditions, thus allowing them to fade with time. Such an attitude only reflects one of two things: 1) that either such a person has not been properly educated into the relevance and profound nature of what India has given the world in its ancient Vedic traditions, or 2) he or she has been mislead by false propaganda that was originally laid down by those who disliked the culture, and has adopted the demeaning attitude and indifference toward it. This should never happen if one actually investigates the depth of truth and real nature of what the Vedic heritage has offered and how it has guided humanity for thousands of years.

The British East Company, a commercial enterprise, was established on December 31, 1600 for spice trading, and India was the center of its attention. According to an agreement, the Dutch East India Company secured the monopoly over Southeast Asia and Indonesia, while the more powerful British East Company obtained the rights on India.

In 1608, Captain Hawkins landed at Surat and came to Jahangir's court at Agra to obtain some trade concessions. Shah Jahan was annoyed by the Portuguese and allowed the British to open a factory at Surat, hoping that the British and Portuguese would weaken each other. In fact, the British troops finally defeated the Portuguese and established the factory there in 1612. In 1633, the East India Company also established a factory at Hariharpur (under Bengal) on the delta of the Mahanadi River. In 1640, Fort St. George was built at Madras, and then the British started to acquire Bombay. In 1690, Job Charnock started a factory on the Hooghly River, not far from a Hindu holy place in the forest called Kali Ghat. In 1695, Sobha Singh's rebellion led the British to build Fort William there. At that time the three villages of Kali Ghat (Calcutta), Sutanati, and Govindapur were assigned by the Moguls to the British on lease at the annual rent of 12,000 rupees. Later, the East India Company was granted rights to free trade in Bengal with an annual tax of 3,000 rupees. The British were also permitted to settle and acquire land anywhere in Calcutta.

By the middle of the 18th century, the British East India Company had established centers in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the east coast. French traders arrived in India around 1668, and they also established factories and centers. By 1720, Pondicherry and Chandernagar were the two main centers. Between 1720 and 1740, the volume of French trade was 10 times larger than the British. British and French then started to fight against each other for supremacy until 1763 with the three Carnatic wars, involving also local princes and politicians who sided with either party. Finally, the French were defeated.

After the battle of Plassey, in 1757, the British obtained from the Moguls the right to collect revenue from these areas in return for an annual tribute and for keeping order and peace by using the army of the local Nawabs. Then the Company defeated Tipu Sultan of Mysore in 1792 and the Marathas in 1819, Nepal in 1814-16, Sindh in 1843, Punjab in 1848-49, and Burma in 1886. The idea of commercial enterprise for Europeans was amply supported by the use of force.

Although Britain had rejected some of the most heinous methods of the Catholic Church (like the Inquisition), still they were Christians and believed that white Christians had the right to become the masters of the world. British traders secured their business by openly battling against the local rulers who opposed their presence and activities. In their military force, Europeans were a small minority of officers, while the majority of the soldiers were Indians, either Hindus or Muslims, previously employed by the local Nawabs.

THE SEPOY MUTINY OF 1857

Let us say that not all of the British were the same. Some were actually interested and sympathetic toward the natives of India and their traditions. They worked to understand them and help in their situation. However, for the most part, from the year 1600 when Queen Elizabeth gave the charter to the East India Company, it had been a relationship of commercial exploitation, deceitfulness, betrayal, and at times even complete disregard for human decency to the point of savagery toward the citizens of India.

The arrangements of the British went on with varying stages of difficulty and trepidations for some time, but once there was the mutiny of 1857, or the first war of independence, the British attitude changed drastically. It was from that time that the British used murder and revenge to maintain control over the people, and then began to live more

separately from the natives, staying in their forts and protected areas. They also began to perpetuate the slow destruction of all things Indian, including its arts, sciences, philosophy, and most importantly, its Vedic culture.

The British also gorged themselves openly on their main staple—dead cows, or beef. Though the Indian reaction was usually docile, it cannot be underestimated how much disgust this disregard for dietary standards caused amongst their Indian associates. It was viewed as a complete lack of respect, not only toward Hindu Indians, but toward the most esteemed of animals in Vedic culture.

Of course, for the British to enjoy their main foodstuff of beef, they had to establish slaughterhouses. This was but another crime against India and its culture, which was known to be completely against the slaughtering of cows. To the British, eating beef put them in an elitist class over and above those who merely ate vegetables and grains. While Robert Clive was the Governor of British India, amongst all the other crimes he committed against India and its people, he made a study of the local agricultural system. Therein it became clear that for the rural process of self-sufficiency and farming to proceed, it was centered on the cow and bull. With a little land and a cow, a family could be quite self-reliant in their need for food. A bull would help till the soil and grow crops, while a cow would produce milk from which so many preparations could be made, including curd, yogurt, butter, ghee, etc. Both of them could produce fuel from the cow dung and insecticide from the urine, along with natural fertilizer for growing crops. Everything that was needed was produced easily and naturally with proper management. This was actually part of the Vedic system of simple living and high thinking.

However, to break this system, the British devised the means to eliminate the cow. Thus, the first slaughterhouse in India was built in 1760 and had the means to kill as many as 30,000 cows in a day. This would give the British their meat, and also start the process of decreasing the number of cows in the land. This would slowly make the Indians less self-sufficient and undermine the agricultural process, thus making them more dependent on the British and whatever facilities they provided. This gradually included the need for industrial fertilizer to be imported and purchased from England instead of natural manure from local cows. This was also another way to deprive people of the recommendations of the Vedic system of life.

After the first slaughterhouse was established, Robert Clive built a number of others in various parts of India. By 1910, there were 350 such slaughterhouses working day and night.

In spite of the Indian government making promises of shutting down slaughterhouses after the country became independent, the number of them actually increased to more than 36,000. Some of them continue to expand and increase the quantity of cows they can slaughter on a daily basis. Presently, they have reduced the number of cows in India by more than 200 million in the last 40 years. This is but the leftover effect of the British wherein the elite live off the means and resources that could provide for the many, and in this respect by killing the most reputable and respected animal in India.

The Sepoy Mutiny came about mostly because the British imposed its religious bias on Indians. It was triggered particularly by the Brahmana troops after it was rumored that a new cartridge for their rifles was being used that had been greased with cow fat. The cartridges required them to be bitten before firing, which meant that the Hindus would come in contact with and even ingest cow fat. Of course, this would be totally unacceptable to any Hindu. Similar rumors were started amongst the Muslims about the cartridge being greased in pig fat. But before this there had been talk of how the British planned to convert all of India to Christianity. And the way many of the Protestant missionaries treated Indians, and their disdain toward Indian culture, certainly helped show evidence that this may be the case.

The mutiny of the Indian army against the British traders started at Barrackpore and spread to vast areas in Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Arrah (Bihar), etc. On May 10, 1857, the Indian sepoys of Meerut marched on Delhi and proclaimed Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor, as the Emperor of India, hoping that he would oppose the British.

Among the participants to the revolt, there were Tatia Tope, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Kunwar Singh, Bahadur Shah II, Nana Saheb, the Wahabis in Patna, and the Hindu community in Benares. However, additional powerful leaders like Holkar, Sindhia, the Nawab of Bhopal, and others actively opposed the revolt and helped the British to suppress it. After the mutiny, the tepid support the British gave toward its missionaries declined greatly, but the damage had already been done.

The two main atrocities on the Indian side is that when Sir Hugh Wheeler surrendered on the condition of safe passage of himself, about four hundred men, and some women and children, while the men were getting into boats, were killed. Only four survived. A second was in

Bibigarh where a large number of women and children were confined. Somehow they were killed and their bodies thrown into a well. These events aroused tremendous feelings of revenge among the British in both India and England. Thereafter, the British came down severally on those that mutinied, and many others who did not.

Numerous citizens of Delhi were taken out into the open where thousands were killed with or without trails, with or without proof of anyone's involvement in the mutiny or death of the English citizens. Most of the atrocities are now suppressed from British history, but the actions of the British against Indians were savage and despicable. At Delhi, Brigadier-general John Nicholson, who was a tormented homosexual soldier, who had been in India since 1839, suggested, "Let us propose a bill for the flaying alive, impalement, or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi. The idea of simply hanging the perpetrators of such atrocities is maddening." Thus, sepoys were stripped, tied to the ground, and branded over every part of their bodies. Henry Cotton was the one who went around and put them out of their misery by blowing out their brains. No action was taken against the torturers. The Time's journalist, a man named Russel, saw Englishmen calmly looking on while a bayoneted prisoner was slowly roasted over a fire. Other Muslim sepoys were sewn into pigskins or smeared with pork fat before execution, as favored by the British. To a Muslim, a pig is the most fowl animal and there is the idea that one will not reach heaven if killed in pigskin.

Other Indians were whipped, and then forced to stand in front of cannons to be blown apart with grapeshot. A clergyman's wife remembered, "One gun was overcharged and the poor wretch was literally blown to atoms, the lookers-on being covered with blood, and fragments of flesh." The ruthlessness of the British, and their readiness to punish the Indians of any age or sex, regardless of whether they had any part in the rebellion, is a perpetual moral stain on the "Raj".

Meanwhile, the 83-year old Bahadur Shah II and his sons were arrested at Humayun's tomb and taken as prisoners of war. Lieutenant Hodson shot and killed the princes merely on the suspicion that they had something to do with the killing of many Englishmen and women. And the Mughal emperor was taken off to Burma where he died in 1862 at the age of eighty-seven. The fighting at places like Lucknow went on until March 1, 1858.

Rani of Jhansi fought with her infant son tied to her back, leading her troops out of the fort on horseback on April 4, 1858. She was followed by the British army as she went to Gwalior, where the pro-

British Scindia fled to Agra, and where she occupied it with Tatia Tope. Hugh Rose re-captured Gwalior. It was in one of the battles against him in which the Rani dressed herself in male attire while on horseback, and died a warrior's death on June 17. In this way, she has given India, and women in general, the greatest emblem of female courage and patriotism. Meanwhile Tatia Tope was chased over numerous places until April of 1859 when he was captured by some Scindias and hanged.

The British Crown, worried about the situation, officially took over the administration of the Company in 1858. It also issued a proclamation for the reassurance for religious tolerance toward the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India in order to help quiet the fears of the Indian people regarding forced conversions to Christianity. But the presence of the British in India ceased to be a simple matter of trade and became a war for the imposition of British rule on the entire territory.

Britain appointed a Secretary of State for India, a member of the British cabinet responsible to the Parliament, and divided India into three presidencies: Bengal, Madras, and Bombay. The Hindu or Muslim princely states that accepted subordination to the British government were allowed some independence, but in 1876 Queen Victoria assumed the title of Empress of India claiming the supreme power.

THE "DIVIDE AND RULE" POLICY OF THE BRITISH

The main characteristic of British rule in India was the "divide and rule" policy, aimed at creating hostility among Indians – northern and southern, northern and eastern, rich and poor, high castes and lower castes, Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Jains, and even among the various groups of Hindus like Shaivites and Vaishnavas. The point was that if they could divide a united power in several different ways, they could thereby weaken a solid body of opponents, making it easier to overpower them. This lack of unity was, and has always been, the weakness of India and its people.

The British also created Christian schools everywhere and imposed the Christian "morals" on society, justice, and culture. However, they did not destroy Hindu temples or persecute Hindu priests, so under their rule several significant temples that had been destroyed by the Muslims were rebuilt by wealthy Hindus.

In India the British introduced railways, machineries, telegraph, postal system, newspapers, and imposed the use of English on the entire

territory. Although they did so for their own advantage and tried to control them strictly, these innovations became very useful instruments for the organization of a nation-wide Swaraj movement. Furthermore, by facilitating communication and travel, they helped Indians to discover a greater spirit of unity and to learn to cooperate at the national level. Even the introduction of English helped because it was a common language that provided communication among Indians of different areas and cultures.

The British also built roads and improved communications, also at the international level. Many Indians went to England to get an education – from Madanlal Dhingra, Aurobindo Ghose, Vir Savarkar, to Gandhi. By moving around in England, they came in contact with the liberal movements there and learned how to organize people in a democratic way. They saw how rallies and marches were held in Europe by the developing movement of civil rights, and how the labor unions had started to organize workers in the factories to oppose oppression of the capitalists. They studied British and international law and found ways to create associations and political groups, and many became lawyers. Some English born liberals, such as Annie Besant, also came to India to help the cause of civil rights, freedom, and self-determination.

In the beginning, the self-determination movement (Swaraj) did not question the British sovereignty over India, they simply wanted more civil freedom and a better government.

Among the first protagonists of the Independence struggle, the Sanskrit scholar and astronomer Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the leader of the Indian Freedom Movement until his death in 1920 before Gandhi. Like all the other leaders of the Freedom Movement, he was jailed by the British government for several years, but while in jail he wrote a commentary to *Bhagavad-gita*.

Tilak was convinced that the educational system was a very important weapon: schools controlled by the British taught children blind submission to the political authority and the intrinsic inferiority of Hindu culture and religion compared to Christianity. Therefore, he started a school based on Hindu values, and later founded the Deccan Education Society to inspire other people to open more schools. He also started a newspaper (Kesari) in 1881 to educate people in general.

The other important factor that had to be tackled was economic exploitation: the British sent raw materials from India and brought back finished goods from their industrial factories in England, such as textiles, glass, paper, etc., to sell in India. Since the industrial products were cheaper and the texture was smoother and finer, Indian people started to

purchase them instead of the local production. The local self-sufficiency and prosperity of rural India was practically destroyed, and many people became destitute.

Tilak preached four "mantras": 1. boycott British goods, 2. create an Indian system of schools, 3. self-determination in local government, and 4. economic self-sufficiency, with the production of necessities at the local level. After his jail term in Burma where he had been deported, Tilak returned to India and actively organized the Khadi movement (hand woven cloth), as well as picketing against alcoholism and imported goods. These principals could very well be re-established todayfor the benefit of India's future.

ON THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

In 1883, the Indian Association (Bharat Sabha) organized an International exhibition in Calcutta, a political conference on all-India basis, with discussions about reforms, and a list of requests to be presented to the British government. The second conference was held in 1885 for the foundation of the Indian National Congress. The convenor of the first session of the INC was Allan Octavian Hume, a retired employee of the British government, with the presidency of an eminent Bengali lawyer, W. C. Bonnerjee.

Something extraordinary was happening. People were starting to unite and cooperate: Indian peasants, lawyers, students, scholars, writers, teachers, women and even British civil rights fighters. The Indian people had found leaders, had started to understand the nature of their enslavement, and could see there was an opportunity to become free from bondages.

The most profitable trade for the British Crown was probably the indigo dye. In Bengal, farmers were forced to grow indigo plants as monocultures instead of the variety of foods that allowed them to live and prosper in a self-sufficient way. The money they received for their produce was very little, and they had to pay heavy taxes that forced them to get indebted with the money lenders or to sell their lands to the British enterprises. These also used other methods to drive peasants out of their lands, such as torching villages and abducting women, for example. The farmers went on strike and refused to cultivate indigo any more, and the middle class intelligentsia of Bengal came to their aid by joining their protest through newspapers and other literature; a popular drama about

the plight of the farmers was also translated into English and published by James Long.

Bengal became the heart of the Freedom Movement, with such great success that the British government started to worry. In 1905, in order to weaken the spirit of the movement, Lord Curzon was appointed to organize the partition of Bengal, with the prime purpose of creating hostility between Muslims and Hindus.

West Bengal, of Hindu majority, was to include Bihar and Orissa, while East Bengal, with a Hindu minority, had Assam, Malda, and Tripura. The anti-partition protest movement blazed everywhere with shop strikes, picketing in support of the boycott of British goods, and religious ceremonies, such as bathing in the Ganga River and performing *rakhi-bandhana* (tying a red string around each other's wrists) to signify the bond of brotherhood among the protesters.

Together with the boycott of British goods, Indians started their own local enterprises of textile mills and weaving industries producing the coarse Swadeshi cloth, as well as sugar mills, match and soap industries, to offer the "fair trade" alternative to the local market.

College and university students joined the movement by denouncing the bias of the British educational institutions, "houses for manufacturing slaves" as they called them, and dropped out of school in protest. In 1902, they started the "Dawn Society", then the National Council of Education in 1905 to create Bengali medium schools with Indian teachers. Clandestine newspapers mushroomed in support of the freedom movement. The word spread all over India and the example was followed in many other areas. Many also took to guerrilla action against the British, especially in Bengal, Maharastra, Punjab, and Madras.

Groups like the Anushilan Samiti were formed to fight against western culture. The heritage of Paramahamsa Ramakrishna, who died in 1886, was carried on by his disciple Vivekananda with more than a touch of nationalistic pride: Vivekananda (Narendranath Datta, 1863-1902) traveled abroad to affirm the values of Indian culture and spirituality, winning much sympathy at the international level, and established the Ramakrishna Mission. Rabindranath Tagore founded his university at Shanti Niketan, and became famous at international levels: he was awarded knighthood by the queen of Britain.

In Bengal, the Brahmo Samaj movement (founded in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy) and in Maharashtra the Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society in the bhakti tradition) made a special effort to present Indian philosophy in terms that could be understood by the western mentality – both for the growing international support and for the westernized class

of British educated "brown sahibs." All of these points are still of primary importance today in order to allow others to understand the value of Vedic culture.

The Brahmo movement was also at the origin of the first workers' organizations. In 1870, a Brahmo leader, Sasipada Banerjee, founded the Sramajivi Samiti and the newspaper Bharat Sramajivi. The cotton mill workers in Bombay started an association in 1890. Later, however, the workers' movements became influenced by the socialist and communist ideals that had been spread by the Russian revolution of 1917. This ideology was also supported by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Swami Dayananda Sarasvati (1824-1883) founded the Arya Samaj in 1875 for a rediscovery of the genuine spirit of Vedic culture, and encouraged the conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism. Even today, the interest of non-Hindus in Hinduism and Vedic culture is a reason why yoga is presently so prominent in the Western countries.

Aurobindo Ghose, who had studied in England, started his public life as an extremist activist in Bengal's Jugantar dal, and was jailed for his first line participation to the movement. Later, he developed a more spiritual approach and became famous as a saint. He moved to Pondicherry and laid the spiritual foundations of the future Auroville. He cooperated first with Margaret Elizabeth Noble (known as Sister Nivedita) and then with Mirra Alfassa (known as Mère, "the Mother").

The Muslims, however, felt they were losing too much ground to the Christian British on one side, and to the Hindus on the other side. So instead of uniting with the Indian Hindus to work together for a free India, they started a strategy of cooperation with the British against the Hindus, and at the same time they made some efforts to reform the social customs that did not sit well with the British morality, like the *purdah* (segregation of women), polygamy, and the *talaq* (easy divorce for men). Syed Ahmed Khan started a Muslim cultural center in Aligarh that later became a university.

In 1911, the British government gave in and annulled the partition of Bengal, the partition of which they had been proposing for some time; the capital of the British Raj was also moved from Calcutta to Delhi. However, the police continued to suppress the secret societies, and many of their members were forced to flee abroad, to London, Paris, Germany, United States, Canada, and various areas of Asia. From there, they collected money to send funds and weapons for the revolution back home, securing the help of Indian emigrates and foreign governments who were unfavorable to Britain.

World War I offered more opportunities to the Indian Freedom Movement: Madame Cama had already conducted a successful campaign in France, Germany, and the United States in presenting the cause of India and unfurling the new Indian tricolor flag in Berlin (1905). She continued to campaign, revealing to the international press the enormous profits of the British Crown in the colonial business (35 million pounds every year) and asking that Indians should be given the political right to vote.

In 1915, the lawyer Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India after a period in South Africa, where he had observed the effect of the racist apartheid government. He immediately started a non-violent protest movement, called Satyagraha, spreading it in Bihar, Ahmedabad, and Gujarat. The charisma of Gandhi encouraged moderate and extremist activists to join forces. Thousands of students, lawyers, and government employees left their occupations in protest against the government. The British civil right activist Annie Besant cooperated with Bal Gangadhar Tilak in starting the Home Rule League. Women also started to participate actively in the Movement.

Even the Muslims became attracted, and while previously they had tried to cooperate with the British, in 1913 they changed their course and started cooperating with the Indian National Congress.

In 1919, the British government decided to give some concessions, and appointed Montague and Chelmsford to concede a limited freedom in local self-government, education, health, cooperatives, but retained full control of police, finance, and land revenue. On the other hand, with the Rowlatt Act, the British tightened the laws against “anarchical and revolutionary” activities to stop the political movement, ordering arrest and deportation for suspects, special tribunals, and prohibition of freedom propaganda. The protest continued, spearheaded by Gandhi, who was arrested. The suppression of the protest had the worst episode in Amritsar, where on April 13, 1919, General Reginald Dyer ordered his 50 soldiers to open fire without warning on a peaceful crowd of about 10,000 people, men, women, and children who had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, a public square, for the Baisakhi Fair.

THE PLAGUE

We also have to remember that with the British came new diseases that India did not have before, or had previously not been so easily affected by them. While the British kept the people

undernourished, they could not fight off the diseases so easily. These included small pox, tuberculosis, and typhoid. According to the British Gazetteer, 19 million Indians died of famine around this time, but 15 million more died of the plague and malaria during 1891-1900, according to Air William Digby. Of course, the same thing happened wherever the British went, including North and South America, where millions of the natives died from foreign diseases.

THE SLAUGHTER AT JALLIANWALA BAGH

This was no doubt one of the most unfortunate and brutal situations in the history of the British in India. It all started when two people had been arrested on April 10, 1919 for incitement when they addressed the April 6 protest of the arrest of Gandhi by the British when he was traveling to supervise a peaceful demonstration in Delhi. This brought supporters out onto the streets on April 11. British troops stopped and fired upon them, who then took revenge with arson and violence that left five Europeans dead. The violence itself was instigated by the action of the government, which was headed by the lieutenant-governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who sent for more troops. They arrived the next day under Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer. Dyer issued orders prohibiting all meetings and demonstrations anywhere in the city of Amritsar.

The following Sunday was the popular festival day of Baisakhi, and many villagers from outside of Amritsar had gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh to celebrate, which is an open garden but surrounded by houses with only four narrow ways out. Some of this assembly may have been politically motivated, but many, especially the villagers from outside Amritsar, had no knowledge of any prohibition of gatherings. On the other hand, Dyer is likely to have had no knowledge of any Indian festival, and little concern either. Dyer arrived at the Bagh with a force of Indian and Gurkha troops and immediately gave the order for them to shoot into the crowd. They continued to shoot until he ordered the cease fire just before they ran out of ammunition. Then, with no further concern for the hundreds of dead and injured, he left the area.

The official inquiry concluded that in ten to fifteen minutes there had been 1650 rounds fired, 1200 men, women, and children had been seriously wounded, and 379 had died, though unofficial reports gave that figure at 530. The crowd had made no threat to anyone, and Dyer gave no command to disperse or warning of consequences. There was little

means of escape, and once the firing began, there was no where to go. People ran anywhere they could, many jumping into a well in the park, in which you can still see the bullet holes to this day. A plaque commemorates the dead and injured, which is placed on the wall in the main entranceway where Dyer entered the park.

Under questioning, Dyer seemed proud of his actions, which he said were done in revenge for the previous killings of Europeans, and to make an example which would deter any further defiance from the people of the Punjab.

He later contended that martial law existed de facto in Amritsar at that time, although only demonstrations had been forbidden. He also claimed that his military column had stopped at every important point to announce that all meetings had been banned which was accompanied by the beating of drums.

However, when questioned with the help of a map of the city, General Dyer was forced to admit that important localities had been omitted, and a large number of people would not have known about the proclamation. Yet, General Dyer admitted in his deposition that the gathering at the Bagh was not a concentration only of rebels, but people who had covered long distances to participate in the Baisakhi fair.

Swinson, an English journalist, described the scene: “Hundreds were asleep in the sun, others were concentrating on their game of cards. A number of them had come with their children, three to 12 years old. Some 27,000 odd people had gathered in the Bagh, an open space surrounded on all sides by houses with only four narrow entrances.”

General Dyer said he would have used his machine guns if he could have got them into the enclosure, but these were mounted on armored cars. He said he did not stop firing when the crowd began to disperse because he thought it was his duty to keep firing until the crowd had fully dispersed, and that a little firing would do no good.

Dyer was known for other antics as well, such as having prisoners publicly beaten, or forced Indians to crawl where an English missionary women had been attacked. This kind of thing was making the Indian population less tolerant of the continuation of British rule over them. Disturbances throughout India and in Delhi were growing. And this incident at Jallianwala Bagh, which was meant to stifle the resistance, only made things much worse.

Dyer was never punished for his actions, although he was relieved of his command, and was actually rewarded once he returned to England, and proclaimed as the “Saviour of the Punjab” and even “Defender of the Empire.” If anything, this only showed all the clearer

the offensive nature and attitude of the British toward India and all Indians. As news went out, even the most moderate Indians toward the British changed their opinion to a more nationalist ideal. Even Tagore returned his Nobel Prize in protest. The December 1919 Congress was also held in Amritsar to highlight this change of attitude. It was presided over by Motilal Nehru, the lawyer from Allahabad, whose family had been immensely pro-British up until now. The British were no longer worthy of respect, so much so that the Nehrus' residence in Allahabad, the Anand Bhawan, had all European furniture removed and Motilal's English suits were taken out and burned. Granddaughter Indira, born in 1917, also remembered being a part of this. Motilal would also join the non-cooperation movement.

THE FINAL STRUGGLES FOR A FREE INDIA—IN SUMMARY

With the end of World War I, Turkey was defeated, and the Indian Muslims asked the British to respect the position and dignity of the Sultan of Turkey, who was the Caliph of all Muslims in the world. The Khilafat movement was supported by Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Tilak, and others with the hope of uniting Hindus and Muslims in the protest against the British rulers. However, in the end Kemal Pasha in Turkey abolished the post of Caliph and the Khilafat movement died out in 1921. This enraged the Indian Muslims who started clashing against the Hindus, who had nothing to do with it. The riots between 1922 and 1927 killed about 500 people. The possibility of an agreement between the movement, represented by Gandhi, and the British failed due to the Muslim opposition. Gandhi resumed his Satyagraha movement with Vallabhabhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Purushottamdas Tandon, and Subhash Chandra Bose. All of them were jailed because the British government declared the movement "illegal."

In 1922, the Swaraj Party was founded, and tried to unite the political movement that had already divided with the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikh League, and the Muslim League. At the same time, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose were inspired by the Russian revolution and started to spread the ideas of socialism.

In 1925, on Vijayadashmi Day, Doctor Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (Doctorji) founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS (the association for voluntary service to the nation) in Nagpur. Dr. Hedgewar was born in 1889, and in the span of 15 years, he made the Sangh a national organization with *shakhas* (small centers) all over the

country. The members were called Swayamsevaks, or voluntary workers. They played a major role in the freedom fight in India and still carry national influence to this day, though they have often been portrayed in less than the best light. One reason for this is that Godse, the man who shot and killed Mahatma Gandhi, had been a member of the RSS, so the media emphasized that point. However, what they often do not say is that Godse had also been a member of the Congress Party. So how can you blame one or the other for the independent actions of an individual?

The basic goals of the RSS included: To organize and unite the various Hindu communities on the basis of their intrinsic common culture and eternal values. To understand, advance, and uphold Hindu thought, philosophy, and identity. To create a sense of awareness and pride in the Hinduness that can enlighten life around us. And to develop conviction in the Sangh ideology among all members of the society.

Thus, they were unifying Hindus of every class and background without considering caste divisions. This was much needed, and still is, and helped people focus on the common goals of the Vedic philosophy which are applicable to everyone. The RSS also inspired the feelings of patriotism. Many of its members participated in Gandhi's Satyagraha demonstrations. In this way, they worked in many areas for the independence of India from British control, and participated in the "Quit India" movement. In fact, by 1930, the intelligence department of the British government submitted a report, which is still within the National Archives, that states that the RSS was heading towards the cause of attaining independence in a planned way. Even during the time of partition, the Swayamsevaks went to protect the Hindus who were being slaughtered while trying to leave Pakistan. Thus, they worked in courageous ways for the benefit of people all over India.

On the eve of his demise in June of 1940, Dr. Hedgewar bequeathed Madhav Sadashiva Golwalker (Sri Guruji) as Sar-Sanghachalak, or the next leader of the RSS. Sri Guruji was called such because he had been given that name by his students while working as a professor at the Hindu University in Varanasi, and also because he had been initiated by Swami Akhandananda, a Gurubhai (guru brother) of Swami Vivekananda.

Guruji lead the Sangh organization for 33 years, during which time he traveled to every province of India twice a year, propounding the logic of the concept of the Hindu Rasthra or Hindu nation, making it understandable for both the simple villagers and the city intellectuals. Because of his inspiring personality, he drew a number of personalities to the organization, and created a dynamic band of thousands of *pracharaks*

(full-time workers) who took up various fields of national work, such as education, labor, politics, etc. Furthermore, influential affiliates, such as the Vidyarthi Parishad, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bharatiya Vanavasi Kalyan Ashrama, and others sprung up as an increasing number of co-workers with Sangh ideology began to mold them in their respective fields of interest. These have all played their parts in molding the independence and freedom of India, and still work for the same purpose today.

Meanwhile, in 1925, the All India Communist Party was founded, and in Bengal it took a socialist hue with the Socialist Republican Association (1928). Women also started to participate in the communist movement that gathered many of those who were searching for a solution that was different from the hostility between Muslims and Hindus, rejecting all religions.

The British tried to relieve the situation by appointing the Simon commission in 1927 for constitutional reforms, but no Indians were included in the commission, and this did not satisfy the freedom movement. In 1928, an all-parties conference prepared a draft constitution for the commission: only the Indian National Congress approved it.

The Muslim League, lead by Jinnah, broke ties with the Congress, demanding 14 points to protect the interests of the Muslims, which included a federal India with autonomous provinces, with not less than 1/3 Muslims in the central government, a separate representation for religious groups on the same percentage basis (although the Muslims were a minority), no laws against the interests of religious minorities, full freedom to all religions, facilities for Muslim culture and education, that there be Muslims in all local governments (at least 1/3), that there be a separate Sindh from Bombay, as well as maintain a Muslim majority in Bengal, Punjab, and the north-western states, and so on. His position was supported by many, including the poet Iqbal, who openly wanted a separate Muslim nation within India.

However, not all Muslims agreed with the extremist position of Jinnah and his Muslim League. For example Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his social organization Khuda khid mudgar (“the red shirts”) in the north-west provinces wanted to cooperate with the Hindus.

By the next year the Congress, too, decided to demand complete independence from the British. That was declared on January 26, 1930. The movement regained momentum with the Salt March (Dandi march) of 320 km, performed by Gandhi and a large group of activists to go to the sea shore and collect salt directly from the sea, challenging a law on

the salt monopoly by the British government. Thousands of people followed his example. Later, in 1931, Lord Irwin invited Gandhi to London for talks.

In 1932, the British Prime Minister MacDonald announced the "Communal Award" Act by which the different religious groups could send their representatives separately to the provincial legislatures. The disadvantaged or "scheduled" castes of Hindus also had a separate provision. Gandhi asked the Hindus to stand united, and B. R. Ambedkar and the other representatives of the lower castes rejected the offer of the British government.

In 1933, Gandhi suspended the Satyagraha movement and devoted himself to the Harijans (the new name for the lower castes, which meant children of God). Gandhi launched and withdrew the Satyagraha movement several times, hoping to educate the mass of people to non-violent protest only, but his attempts failed again and again. Finally, in 1934, he terminated the Satyagraha movement and left the Congress, which turned to socialism.

In 1934, the British banned the communist party, and continued to negotiate with Gandhi and the Congress. In 1935, with the Government of India Act, the British introduced a federal structure offering to the native states (princely kingdoms) the option to participate or not. A Governor General would have 10 Ministers elected by local legislatures, and 2 chambers also elected locally. India was divided in 11 provinces with Governors, plus a number of special areas directly under the Governor General. However, the Governor maintained the power of veto over all decisions of local Governors, and could also make and enforce new laws without consulting them. It was not a very good deal, but the Congress accepted to run in the elections. It obtained the absolute majority in five provinces, and a majority in two. The minority of the Muslim league demanded coalition ministries for all the provinces.

This government experience for the Congress was difficult because of the conflicting interests of Hindus and Muslims, landlords and peasants, businessmen and workers. Good work was done by helping negotiation between employers and workers, distribution of land to landless peasants, anti-usury laws, tenancy, education, and freedom of press.

Under the presidency of Subhash Chandra Bose (1938-1939), the Congress became more and more oriented to socialism. When he became too extreme, he was forced to resign and he proceeded to found the Forward Block within the Congress. He was finally expelled by the Congress for his extremism. In the same year, World War II started and

Britain declared that India was also participating in the war; all Indian ministers resigned in protest. Bose, kept in house confinement by the British, managed to escape in 1941 and he reached Russia through Kabul. From there he reached Germany, where he was welcomed by Ribbentrop and spoke to Indians from the German radio.

Bose convinced the Nazis to free a number of Indian prisoners of war and organized them for the new "Independent India Army." There the slogan "Jai Hind" started. After about one year Bose was called to Japan by Rashbehari Bose, who had fled there already in 1915 to organize a conference of the Indian emigrates in Southeast Asia.

In the meantime, in India Gandhi launched a new Satyagraha campaign. In 1941-1942, Japan occupied Singapore and Burma. Britain tried to consolidate their position in India by sending a socialist member of the British government, Cripps, to propose a Dominion status with regional autonomy, but he could not convince anyone. Gandhi considered his proposal a "postdated cheque on a crashing bank" and observed that Japan was ready to invade India from Burma. He launched the "Quit India" campaign, which was adopted by the Congress. Almost all the members of the Congress were arrested by the British on the very next day. The people revolted in mass in the "August revolution": peasants, students, and workers rallied, and local governments were formed. Among the other examples, there is the famous case of a 72-year old peasant widow, Matangini Harza, who led a big crowd to occupy the Tamluk police station in Midnapore in support of the local government founded by the Freedom Movement. However, the British suppressed the movement in two months.

In 1943, Subhash Chandra Bose became the president of the Indian Independent League in Singapore, declared a Free India Government, and declared war to Britain and America. His Indian National Army liberated the Andaman and Nicobar islands from the British and went with the Japanese up to Kohima, Nagaland. However, in the meantime the Japanese had to accept defeat after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Indians who were allied with them were taken prisoners by the British. Subhash Chandra Bose is said to have died in a plane crash on August 18, 1945 near Taipei while he was flying to Tokyo, but many think he survived the crash.

At the trial of the generals of the Free India Army (Azad Hind Fauz) at the Red Fort, the vast movement of protest of the population forced the acquittal. Strikes and rallies were held everywhere; in Calcutta the police killed two students, but revolts continued. Gandhi completely

retired from politics to serve the Harijans (called Achhut, "untouchables"), and then he was killed on January 30, 1948.

In 1946, even the Indian navy revolted; the mutiny started in Bombay and soon spread to include 300,000 all across Calcutta, Madras, Karachi, and so on. The soldiers demanded the release of the INA generals, refused to go to war against Indonesian freedom fighters, and also complained about the quality of the food they were getting. The revolt was soon joined by the air force and the army.

Jinnah continued to demand a separate nation for Muslims, called Pakistan, creating more riots. C. Rajagopalachari proposed to consider the idea after obtaining independence from Britain, a plebiscite in the regions that would be affected, and some kind of mutual agreement of cooperation. Jinnah refused. At the Simla conference in 1945, Lord Wavell also proposed an interim government with equal proportions of representatives of Muslims and Hindus, but Jinnah also rejected that proposal.

The situation was transformed in August of 1946 when the Muslim League was frustrated by the slow negotiations for an independent state, and launched the "Direct Action Day," which unleashed an unprecedented wave of communal riots. Events spread in the major cities, such as Bombay (Mumbai), but events were the bloodiest in Calcutta (Kolkata) where 10,000 were killed in a day.

The Calcutta killings were followed by riots across a range of provinces. Fearful Hindus exacted revenge when they heard stories of massacres by Muslims, and then vice versa. Rumors and hearsay created a situation wherein Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communal organizations fed hostility to each other, provoking fear and loathing that was reinforced by every atrocity that occurred.

The empire was obviously crumbling and the British decided to get out. The descendants of the original administrations that had so cunningly sowed divisions now declared that partition was the only way to end communal violence.

The British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that Britain was ready to quit India. Elections were organized in 1946. The British Parliament rushed through the Indian Independence Act in July, and on midnight of August 14, 1947, the British Indian Empire came to an end, and India became an independent nation.

Meanwhile, the fracture between the Congress and the Muslim League became irreversible, and the partition of Bengal and Punjab was inevitable. On August 14, 1947, Jinnah became the president of the

Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in Karachi. Later, in 1971, East Pakistan declared its independence and became known as Bangladesh.

JINNAH AND THE MUSLIM ATTITUDE FOR PARTITION

Mr. Jinnah and Lord Mountbatten were the most in favor of the dividing of India into East and West Bengal, later to become Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, Nehru and some of the moderate Muslims were not much in favor of dividing India. And Gandhi's policy of non-violence and placating to the Muslim demands in hope they would see the light and benefit of cooperation ultimately did much harm to India. But Jinnah was the one, with his hardening demands, who most wanted a separate place for the Muslims of India. He was continuing the basic standard of the previous Mughals two centuries earlier of "Dar-ul-Islam," or the house of Islam, which was motivated merely by the Muslim hatred toward Hindus, or all things non-Muslim. This hatred has been around since the first invasions of the Islamic Arabs into India back in 650, and at this point in time it looks like it is not completely going away entirely as we reflect on the continuation of terrorism in India, the struggles of Hindus in Bangladesh, and the ethnic cleansing that has continued in Kashmir.

What has to be understood is that with many non-Muslims who are converted to Islam, the new converts accept Arabia as their main focus for a homeland, and become a member of "Dar-ul-Islam," or the house of Islam. Then they start to dislike or even hate all things non-Muslim, even the country of his own birth or residence, even his own family and relatives if they remain *kafirs*, or non-Muslim. So in an independent India, how could the Muslims now live under a majority rule by *kafirs*?

The Muslims had always invaded, raided, looted, and razed India's temples, and killed, slaughtered, raped, forcibly converted, and enslaved its people. And many Muslims have held this hatred toward the image-worshiping, "infidel" Hindus to this day. Therefore, how could any Muslim with this attitude have any inkling of willingness to share on an equal level the freedom with the Indian citizens of an independent India?

This was the whole point of creating Pakistan, a country where the Muslims could live on their own, by their own standards, and leave the Hindus to themselves in India. This was the basis for the almost total exodus of the Hindus from Pakistan, yet more than half of India's

Muslim population decided to stay in India where they were not forced to leave by the majority Hindu population. This is because of the overwhelmingly tolerant attitude of the Indian Hindus, which has also gotten them into trouble when the hosted minorities have far less respect for their hosts. And it was even worse where Jawaharlal Nehru told the Hindus of West Pakistan merely to be good citizens there, and left them to the mercy of the Muslims. Not a lot of mercy has been shown as the Muslims of Pakistan systematically killed numerous Hindus, raped the women, and persecuted them until they drove many of them into India. The same thing happened in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, which is why a 40% Hindu population there has been reduced to only 8% today. In 1971, during the Bangladesh freedom fight, the Pakistani soldiers killed over 800,000 Hindus in addition to the Muslims, which few people discuss today.

Once the boundary line for West Pakistan was decided for dividing the Punjab, many of the Hindus and Sikhs suddenly found themselves on the wrong side. The Sikhs also felt more comfortable in India, thus hundreds of thousands moved in endless caravans, some extending 70 miles in length. This was during the monsoon rains. So they suffered greatly, not only from the weather, but many columns of refugees, as they passed the Muslims, were attacked and even slaughtered by them.

In the days immediately after August 15, 1947, two extermination campaigns led to mass migration in opposite directions. Within less than a year, refugees in the millions had moved both ways between India and Pakistan. The total movement of people is estimated to be around 17 million, one of the largest peacetime movements ever, while around one million died in the slaughter that accompanied partition. The carnage was tragic, but it was not inevitable. It was the result of all the major players accepting the idea that communalism was a lesser evil than the prospect of social revolution. Historians of South Asia generally agree that if Britain had sought a less hasty and better prepared transfer of power, much of the bloodshed could have been avoided.

In this way, while one group was passing another in their move into or out of India/Pakistan, there were terrible slaughters of the Hindus by the Muslims. Many stories came out of that terrible period. One was that of a 40-year old man who explained to Shivananda Murty Garu how he had been riding on the train from Lahore to Delhi, and before the train had even entered Indian territory, the Muslims had stopped the train and climbed on board. The man said he was the 5th child of his mother, with

two elder sisters and two elder brothers. It was a common sight to see their kith and kin butchered in the trains. His mother knew what would happen and spread her sari to hide the two young girls and himself under the seat, but she could not hide her two other sons. They were standing there, aged 14 and 11, and before his mother's eyes, her two sons were beheaded. It was not unlikely for only remnants of families to get off the train in Delhi after leaving Pakistan, with carloads of dead bodies. And this happened hundreds and thousands of times. Yet, if we now see Hindus standing up to defend themselves, they are called fundamentalists, fanatics, or communalists. But should there not be an action-plan to preserve and protect themselves and Sanatana-dharma? Are we supposed to be so tolerant that we wait until all the Hindus of India are slaughtered, either physically, mentally, or spiritually? The great heroes of India did not wait for such a time but took action in many ways to preserve and protect its culture and its people. Dharma is the appropriate action in thought, word, and deed to accommodate the particular situation. Dharma means to defend Dharma in whatever way is required. If people can at least respect our Dharma, then we can also respect them. But if they mean to kill us, or to disrespect Sanatana-dharma, then are we not supposed to defend ourselves? What was the example given us in *Bhagavad-gita* and by so many other great warriors who fought for the rights we presently have today? We must continue to work to keep those rights.

Kashmir was between India and Pakistan, and Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru never got on well, which added to the tension. Countries which could have been good neighbors turned out to be enemies from the start. At the time, Kashmir had a Muslim majority but a Hindu prince who had to make the decision of whether to join Pakistan or India. Pakistan tried to force the issue by first encouraging a local tribe to uprise and invade Kashmir. When that happened, the Kashmir Maharaja pleaded to India for assistance. Before that could be provided, the Maharaja had to join Kashmir with India. Thereafter, Indian troops were flown into Kashmir to quell the uprising and succeeded in blocking the tribal army's attack. Shortly thereafter, India and Pakistan were at war in Kashmir.

The partition of India caused one of the world's bloodiest exoduses in human history. It still goes on today as more Hindus are persecuted in both Bangladesh and Pakistan and forced to flee to India. The persecution continues to be spread by Muslims in Kashmir, which was once a Hindu majority, the homeland of a vast Vedic culture hundreds of years ago before Shah Mir (Mir Sayed Ali Hamadni)

occupied Srinagar in 1339 (some say 1370) and started converting the people to Islam. Is it that they will not be satisfied until they have all of India, as the original invaders had wanted?

* * *

Obviously, much more could be written about India's history and what all has happened after independence. But what has been written herein is to help preserve the history of the many sacrifices of the Indian people so that we do not forget the turmoil India and its people have gone through in order to survive and continue, not only socially but also culturally and spiritually. We must realize that only if we continue to honor this memory by standing strong for Dharma will there be the freedom for its continuation well into the future. This is also our Dharma or duty, otherwise it may indeed fade away if we are not careful.

As of now, is it any wonder that India is doing as well as it is, becoming a major economic factor in the world? India was always a highly evolved country before it was repressed by outside invaders. Thus, it is only natural that once it became free to develop itself as it has, in spite of the remaining demeaning influences in its society, India would quickly begin ascending the stairway to reach its maximum potential.

The future of India also depends on how well all of its citizens work together. There no doubt are and will be many challenges, and there are those who still seek to demean and even destroy the Vedic traditions and its temples and monuments. We have to make sure that does not happen if we value what India has given the world. The civilization that gave us yoga, the lofty Vedic philosophy, the advanced system of mathematics for which we are still enjoying the accomplishments it gave us years ago, and so many other things, all need to be remembered and respected. It is the roots of much of the advanced civilization that we have today. And by studying the Vedic culture and its spiritual philosophy, we will find that it is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago in its ability to help humanity reach its highest potential, either collectively or individually.

CHAPTER NINE

The British Salt Tax The Cause of Much Suffering and Many Deaths

This is a story of another aspect of the British rape and pillage of India and its people, a part of history that many have forgotten or simply have not heard about. This is only a summary of various facts and information on the Customs Line and the trouble it created. But for a more complete understanding, I urge you to read *The Great Hedge of India* by Roy Moxham, who provides a more fascinating story of his search to find the monstrous Custom Line.

The Customs Line, as it was known in its vicinity, stretched across a great length of India. This was no small project. It had a distance of over 2,300 miles. In its prime, it was guarded by 12,000 men with 1,720 guard posts. It would have stretched from London to Constantinople. It consisted principally of an immense, impenetrable hedge of thorny trees and bushes, which included the babool, the Indian plum, the carounda, the prickly pear, and the thuer plants. The hedge itself was an impenetrable barrier which allowed neither man nor beast to go through. This was a living barrier which at its maximum was about 14 feet high and 14 feet at its base. However, it demanded much work to maintain it, and once it was no longer maintained, it did not take long for vast sections of it to dry out, get swept away by wind, or just disappear. Yet, while it existed, it was a most effective way of controlling the population and the salt traffic.

Where you can find the information regarding this massive hedge is primarily in the India Office Records Building in London which contains the archives of the East India Company. The archives in the India Office Records Building occupy nine miles of shelving. There are also 70,000 other official publications and 70,000 maps of India, each focusing on various parts of India in varying degrees of detail.

The British had built this Customs Line to divide the country and keep the people away from the salt which was produced on the other side of the hedge. This would give the British the opportunity to charge people a tax on the salt they needed.

How this was developed is as crafty and as demonic as anyone can get, starting with the East India Company and its desires to collect large amounts of funds from the poor people in India in order to send it back to England.

The East India Company was founded as a commercial enterprise in 1600 under a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth I. It was given power to mint its own money, have its own army and navy, and could make deals with, or even attack, non-Christian states. However, it was restricted in what it could do with Christian provinces.

Later, in the 18th century, the East India Company began to have major territorial ambitions that eventually resulted in its assuming the position of acting as the government of India and imposing major taxes on its people. This was another aspect of foreign control over the people of India.

At the start of the East India Company's rule over the salt mines, there were approximately 60,000 men employed. The work was extremely hard and offered notoriously bad pay. A laborer received only 13 gundas per day. The gunda was a tiny unit of currency. There were 100 gundas to one anna, and six annas to the rupee. Thus, in a month of working 30 days, a laborer's remuneration would have added up to only four annas (13 gundas multiplied by 30 days is 390 gundas or 4 annas). At that time, one British pound Sterling was the equivalent of about 10 Indian rupees, so one month's work for these laborers was the equivalent of one quarter of one rupee, which is equivalent to 0.025 British pound for the whole month.

In 1756, the Nawab of Bengal drove the East India Company out of its trading post at Calcutta. However, at that time, a 32 year old British man, Robert Clive, was in charge of the East India Company. He led the East India Company's army to victory over the Nawab in Calcutta. This allowed the company to reestablish itself there. Then in 1759, the company acquired land nearby on which there were salt works. Feeling increasingly greedy, the East India Company doubled and tripled the tax, ultimately charging less than one-fifth of a rupee per maund of salt as tax. Each maund was about 82 pounds of salt.

When Robert Clive defeated the Nawab, he put Mir Jafar (one of the nobles) and a mere puppet on the throne. In return, he asked this traitorous Mir Jafar to pay Clive personally the sum of 2,340,000 rupees,

and also rentals of 300,000 rupees a year, along with an 880-sq-mile private estate. In this way, at 32 years of age, Clive instantly became one of the richest of all Englishmen. Ever watching his backside, he then took steps to stop the East India Company from being able to appropriate his wealth.

In 1760, he went back to England and bought control of the East India Company, making him even more powerful and controlling. At the same time, he also purchased enough seats where the small number of electors made it possible to easily bribe a majority so that he and his company became almost immune from parliamentary control. While Clive was consolidating his position, in 1762, he became Lord Clive of Plassey. As this was happening, Mir Jafar abdicated his position out of fear. He was replaced by Mir Kasim. In return for the East India Company's and Clive's support, he agreed to pay the company 5,000,000 rupees a year in silver. This was to be raised by taxing the people, making the people all the more poor and unable to maintain themselves. Meanwhile, the company's employees were looting and pillaging the country with more and more ferocity.

By 1762, even Mir Kasim was worried and had taxed the company merchants. The other Moghul princes joined Kasim due to fear of what might happen to them. The company's army raced to defend itself and its property. It was in 1764 when the company's and the Moghul armies met, and the Moghul forces were all defeated. This was the fight that marked the end of the Moghuls' ruling power and the beginning of total British rule. The company allowed the Moghul emperor to continue as a nominal ruler, but took away all of his opportunity for income. In this way, the East India Company became the feudal lord and began to receive all of the land revenue which was the principal tax, along with other minor taxes. Thus, it had inherited the rights of an income of tens of millions rupees per year.

As the company moved forward in its operation of commercial exploitation of India, is it any wonder that all of the company's employees under the British government accumulated massive personal fortunes? To assist themselves in this way, they used their private armies to force peasants and merchants, who were no longer allowed to sell to foreigners, to sell cheap to them, making it easier to acquire the goods from India.

When Clive returned to India in 1765 he wrote about what he found: "Such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal; nor such or so fortunes acquired in such unjust and rapacious a manner." Let us

remember that he was talking about his own employees. Thus, in an attempt to stifle such methods and problems, Clive banned bribes, and claims of exemption from taxes and duties were greatly curtailed.

However, Clive also established the "Exclusive Company", a private company. Profits would be shared among the Company's senior servants. This new company would be given total control over making whatever profit it could on tobacco, betal nuts, and salt. Thus, for the first time, salt, an essential item of diet, was to be taxed. This meant that no matter what one's status, rich or poor, they would be affected by this new tax. All production of salt, as well as betel nut and tobacco was forbidden, except for the Exclusive Company. They also raised the wholesale price of salt from 1.25 rupees to 2.47 rupees per maund (82 pounds). Thereafter, the East India Company made 6,731,170 rupees in profits, a huge amount in those days, through this tax until London objected.

London, however, was not happy about this monopoly, feeling it was immoral. But, of course, given enough money, things were arranged for it to continue. Clive gave London 1,200,000 rupees annually from the profits, and so the British government took over the monopoly on salt. In this way, the British government continued to tax the Indian public for salt until six months before its independence in August of 1947.

Regardless of how well Clive did in India, it was all short-lived by his own doing. He returned to England in 1767 with honors, but also became addicted to opium. Then in 1774, Clive cut his own throat with a pen knife at the age of 49. He was placed in an unmarked grave.

As things continued, all the money that was collected by the company, and all the profits of the employees, were taken out of India and spent in Britain. Jobs that could have been created in India were provided in England. Thus, India became increasingly poor.

The real problem for the people of India arrived in 1770 with the famine of Bengal. The crop was poor anyway in 1769, but after six months without rain, the crop almost totally failed all over India, which had never happened before. And since the company had taken so much wealth out of India, there was little money to purchase grain. So people began to suffer and die of starvation. Nonetheless, the company had no mercy and forced people to pay the taxes on their land that was used to grow crops. But since there was no produce, there was no income, and no money to pay. Thus, the taxes from land revenue that was due from the family members who managed to survive the famine increased. The company demanded its taxes to such an extent that people had to sell their seed corn as well as their land to pay up. Out of the millions they

collected, the company gave back 90,000 rupees in famine relief—90,000 rupees for 30 million people.

The company's employees also managed to corner the rice market, buying from where the famine did not hit, and then hoarding it in warehouses to be sold to whoever had the most money. The retail price of salt increased drastically. It got so bad that only the wealthier Indians could afford to have rice, and only by exchanging their savings or jewelry. The poor peasants, who earned only 1 rupee per month, simply starved to death. Because of this profit-making tactic of the thoughtless British, it is estimated that between one-third and one-half of the entire population of India—at least 10 to 15 million people—died from the famine at this particular time. If there was ever a crime against India and its people, this was one.

At the same time, the salt tax continued to be collected in full on any salt that was consumed. Again, the poor, which was most of India, could not afford to buy it. But let us remember, salt is a necessity and helps a person fight disease and stay fit in a number of ways. When salt is completely taken out of the diet, especially in the heat of India, people begin to die from salt deprivation. Diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, and simple starvation begin to take their toll.

THE NEED FOR SALT

What we need to understand is that the average human body contains about 6 ounces of salt. The concentration of salt is critical and the body will gain or lose water to keep it constant. Human body temperature is kept down by the cooling action of evaporated sweat. When the air is hot, or during physical work, considerable amounts of sweat are exuded. During really hot days, this can be two pints an hour.

Sweat contains salt. In hot climates, the loss of salt in sweat may exceed one ounce a day. In extreme desert conditions, similar to those in Rajasthan, three ounces of salt can be lost in one day. Half the body's salt in one day! Surplus water will be passed out as urine. The volume of blood in the body will drop. Blood pressure will fall. If the loss of salt continues, the contraction of blood volume will also fall, and blood pressure will relentlessly fall. The brain will be starved of blood. Fainting and ultimately unconsciousness will result. Before the advent of IV drips, it was impossible to feed unconscious people, so they died. When there is extra added salt, the volume of blood increases and blood pressure rises. Therefore, people are told to reduce their intake of salt to

control blood pressure and prevent hardening of the arteries, which leads to kidney disease, strokes, and coronary artery disease.

The principle ingredient of present-day medicine for rehydration is salt. Some Indians thought that cholera was actually caused by lack of salt. Cholera comes from drinking infected water. Continuing to drink such water would probably have caused death in any event. However, where clean water was later available, people without salt would have succumbed nevertheless because it would have been impossible to rehydrate their bodies. India also had many other diarrhea-producing diseases, and typhus, giardia, amoebic dysentery were common. Malaria also causes fever and sweating. The salt lost had to be replaced. Vomiting also causes large amounts of salt to be lost. Children were particularly prone to these and other such infections and died in the millions.

For mothers with babies, human milk contains salt; however, in a salt deficient diet, the mother suffers for her own reservoir is depleted, her health is affected, and this reduces her milk yield and the health of her baby. This would be damaging to the health of the mother, the child, and also induces miscarriages and abnormal births.

The poorest Indians added salt in their food when they could. They believed that their health depended on it, which is correct. But a surplus of salt at one time can not compensate for a shortage later on. The body can not store salt for more than a few days. Therefore, it is important to take salt regularly. Any excess salt is passed out—mostly in the urine—to maintain the correct concentration in blood. Consequently, the effects of salt deprivation, as the body loses water, will be felt quickly.

In temperate climates, volunteers lost over 2 pounds in 4 days on a very low salt diet. In tropical climates with copious sweating, the results are even more dramatic. D. B. Dill of the Harvard University Fatigue Lab while drinking plenty of water, but taking no salt in a hot environment, lost over 4 pounds weight in four days. Too little water or too little salt can both cause heat exhaustion. Lack of water produces a thirst and normally the person drinks and recovers. Salt depletion, on the other hand, does not produce thirst or an enhanced craving for salt. The victim feels unwell, but has no idea why. Lassitude, apathy, headaches, and muscular weakness are the initial symptoms. More salt depletion may lead to giddiness and fainting. Further depletion will induce anorexia, nausea, and vomiting. This will reduce the intake of food and any salt in it, and lead to further vomiting and salt depletion.

Death from salt depletion, especially when accompanied by another illness, would have often been misdiagnosed. In the villages, it would have been put down to other causes. Even in 20th century hospitals, Dr. Marriot, a distinguished British consultant physician of the Middlesex hospital, wrote "their deaths are subscribed to toxemia or uremia or circulatory failure, when they have in fact died from simple lack of salt and could easily have been saved."

Even farm animals were also denied salt, and this would lead to permanently depressed agricultural production, making the Indian people of the time even poorer than they already were.

DEATH AND DYING UNDER THE BRITISH

On account of these factors, altogether between 15 and 30 million people died as a result of the salt tax. So not only did the salt tax decrease access to it, but the supply of salt itself was severely disrupted by the death of so many salt workers, bullock cart drivers, and boatmen who also died from the conditions at the time. Thus, it is impossible to know how many Indians really died because of the callous tactics of the British. They obviously had no concern for the people under them, or the conditions they were creating for the people of India.

India was affected by this for many years, and took a long time to recover from the famine. Many had come close to death and remained ill. Children were stunted in size and capability. In spite of this obvious affect, the company allowed for no relaxation in collecting their land revenues. Landlords had to exert pressure to extract the money from the pitiable population, and in many cases merely let the land go back to jungle. Plus, if the taxes were not paid, the company would not allow crops to be planted on that land, thus making the people even poorer and hungrier. As people became desperate who normally engaged in peaceful or religious activities, there was an increase in crime, especially robbery. Bengal in particular became ridden with robbers and smugglers.

As if things were not bad enough, the British government wanted more money from India. In 1772, Warren Hastings was appointed to control the East India Company's affairs in Bengal, as well as in Bombay and Madras. He was then given the title of Governor General. He realized that his position with the East India Company was dependent on the company in London receiving more money. So, he set about the means to do this by establishing the system by which the company itself

would collect the taxes instead of through agents. This added an additional 5,000,000 rupees a year in revenue for the company.

He also had the company take over the production of salt again, and through his system of manufacture and taxation, starting in 1773, the salt revenue jumped from the mere Rs. 450,000 when Hastings took control to Rs. 2,960,130 per year. By 1784 and 1785, the revenue had risen to the huge amount of Rs. 6,257,470 per year. Naturally, it was all coming from the people of India. So great was this income that the company and Great Britain became dependent on its revenues from salt. Therefore, in 30 years or so the wholesale price of salt increased from 1.25 rupees to about 4 rupees per maund. This happened at a time when famine and unemployment swept Bengal, and when hugely-increased land rents were extorted by the company, and when an agricultural laborer's wages were (if he were employed) one rupee a month. How could this go on? By 1823, the price of salt rose to 12 rupees per maund for adulterated salt.

Back in England, there were, however, debates between the British government and parliament about the moral soundness of the salt tax, and how much salt was necessary for a family in India, or even if their cows or sheep needed it. By 1836, Dr. John Crawford estimated that the people of Bengal spent between two months to six months of their annual income just to provide salt for themselves. However, after the famine and unemployment disasters, many families were completely without money to buy anything. Let us remember, this was not a natural occurrence but a situation that was completely manipulated into being by the British. Famine or no famine, there would have been enough supplies for the Indian people to exist without so much difficulty if they would have been able to manage things themselves, and without all their money and resources being taken out of the country and sent to England by the British.

By the end of the 18th century, the British again wanted more money and increased the tax on salt. People of Bengal were so desperate for affordable salt, they began to acquire it in other ways, such as their own manufacture of it, by stealing it, or smuggling it from outside the company's territory. The company was determined to block off an illicit supply, which set the scene for building the great Customs Line, or the great hedge of India.

To acquire more territories and states of India to be under their control, the British government engineered ways of justifying taking over regions by force. Sometimes they would say a kingdom was ill-managed, and with their military might they would go in and seize it. Or

they might say that a state had lapsed in taxes and for that reason take it for themselves. This Doctrine of Lapse was used successfully over many kingdoms of India. In this way, they acquired huge areas and populations from which they could extract the salt tax. This was one of the reasons for the Indian Mutiny of 1857, after which the British government directly took over control of the country from the now discredited East India Company. However, any ruler who failed to support the British had their kingdoms taken away by the British, which eventually allowed them to take over all of India. This also allowed them to extend the great hedge in 1869 to go on for one continuous length.

As it was, it stretched from the foothills of the Himalayas to Orissa and almost to the sea on the Bay of Bengal. It practically put a stop to all smuggling of salt and increased the revenue from the salt tax to an enormous Rs. 12,500,000 in 1869. However, the duty on imported salt and the profit from the government's manufacturing of it was another Rs. 30,000,000. And the cost to maintain the Customs Line was Rs. 1,620,000 a year, which was no small sum, but worth it for the revenues it helped to maintain.

To add to the distress of the people, customs officials who worked the line also harassed the population and extorted bribes. A few techniques they would use to do that included throwing salt into various houses and then arresting people on false charges of illicit manufacture of salt. They would also enter people's homes in the night, apprehend all the inmates, male and female, and offer insults to the females. Then, while searching people's homes for illicit salt, they would also steal property. At other times they would place people in confinement at Cutcherry for 10 to 15 days with torture, and extract false confessions. As if things were not bad enough, all those who had some influence used it in nefarious ways. It was the corruption in the bureaucracy and the government of the British which laid the seeds for what has become so rampant throughout India today.

Meanwhile, people became increasingly desperate to attain salt, especially those who had become destitute in those troubled times. These people were peaceful and religious, of high intellectual caliber who had been reduced to begging or stealing. From 1877 to 1888, when the commissioner wrote of the "distress arising from the high price of grain," 6,077 persons were convicted of smuggling. Of these, 3,252 failed to pay the fine and so they were sent to prison for an average of 6 weeks of hard, rigorous imprisonment.

Finally, Gandhi selected the salt tax as a prime issue to confront the British, and marched to the ocean at Dandi to gather his own salt,

which was followed by many others, on March 12, 1930. He had said: "Next to air and water, salt is perhaps the greatest necessity of life. It is the only condiment of the poor. Cattle can not live without salt—there is no article like salt outside of water that by taxing which the state can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman poll tax that ingenuity of man can devise."

The march went through Ahmedabad and numerous villages, collecting additional people as they went. After the march, salt manufacturing was going on all across Gujarat. Gandhi also advised his followers to raid the government salt depots and distribute it amongst them, since his logic was that the British had unjustly misappropriated all of the salt anyway. The campaign escalated in this way, even after the government had arrested Gandhi. Large bonfires were held in which piles of British-made cloth were burned, while the people banned the purchase of such goods.

The most infamous of all raids on salt works was the one at Dharasan. Some of the original Dandi marchers tried for the salt works there on May 12, but were arrested. Then another raid on May 15 met with severe beatings. Then on May 21, a crowd of some 2500 gathered at Dharasana. While an American journalist, Webb Miller, looked on, he reported that the crowd gathered in groups, each one taking turns moving toward the salt works, which were defended by 400 police under British officers, with an additional 25 riflemen. As each group moved forward, the police beat them with steal tipped *lathis*. The marchers made no attempt to defend themselves or avoid the blows. As one group would be beaten to the ground, the next group would come forward to meet the same treatment, making the police more enraged. It was a day of extreme heat, and the raid was called off. Webb Miller had counted 320 injured, many with cracked skulls, two of whom had died. Nonetheless, the raids on the salt depots continued through the month, hundreds being arrested. But with the June monsoons due to arrive when salt would be impossible to make, the Congress Party called off further salt raids.

Ultimately, the publicity of these events spread all over the world and Britain was shown as an unfair tyrant, taxing people with salt, and attacking defenseless peaceful people. A pact was arranged between Gandhi and the Viceroy of England in March of 1931. In return for certain concessions, the Congress agreed to call off its program of civil disobedience, but the salt tax however continued for 15 more years after the Dandi March. The salt tax was finally abolished on February 28,

1947, six months before the British were to leave India. Thus, many of the crimes against India by the British Raj finally came to an end.

PART THREE

THE STRUGGLES THAT GO ON TODAY

CHAPTER TEN

Insidious Ideologies

The crimes against India and its culture were never limited to battles, genocides, the wholesale destruction of temples, etc. It was and remains a number of other ways in which the Vedic literature and its culture and traditions are demeaned, criticized, and belittled in an unnecessary way and for false reasons. Thus, anyone who hears such criticism may believe or even perpetuate a poor view of what the Vedic lifestyle really is if that is all they know.

BELITTLING THE VEDIC LITERATURE

One of these techniques to downgrade Vedic culture is the deliberate development of disinformation about its tradition and the foundation of its culture, which is the Vedic literature itself.

This started with the British and the missionaries that were sent over with the goal of delivering the people from "the root of evil," the basis of its "paganism." So the Jesuits in particular, and the Western historians that followed, took away as much of the spiritual reasoning of the Vedic texts, especially in their explanations of them, and made them into a bunch of superstitious mumbo-jumbo. They also dated them to only 1500 years BCE. This was one of the accomplishments of Max Muller.

The reason for this is that the Christians had come up with the ridiculous date of October 23, 4004 BCE as the time when the world was created. Thus, there had to be some time for the development of the Vedic civilization that would show that it could not have possibly reached such a high degree of advancement before the West reached its own self-proclaimed supremacy. After all, how could the people of India surpass them in areas like philosophy, spiritual development, mathematics, astronomy, etc?

Nonetheless, this idea that the Vedic society reached a sophisticated stage much later than they actually did was spread and then

blindly accepted by most everyone without attempting to research and find the real truth of the matter. Now, even some present-day Indian historians spread the same untruths about Indian history, even though they are fewer than before. Thus, the true meaning of the great Sanskrit texts and Vedic histories have been clouded purposefully.

Though the great rishis were able to express their deepest insights in a language that held greater levels of truth for those who became initiated into it through training, those who clung to the mundane or materialistic views were not able to perceive those highest clarifications found in the Vedic spiritual knowledge. In other words, the knowledge within the Vedic texts are not to be taken lightly, and are meant to be revealed to the more serious who will contemplate and study the revelations within. For those who do not fully understand it yet try to teach it, any explanations they may try to provide of it will be utterly misdirected and confusing.

Such knowledge must be studied under the guidance of a qualified spiritual master. The time has now come that this knowledge is being revealed for the value that it holds, but only the more serious can fathom its depths. And those who do will be able to again recognize its profundity and participate in the Vedic traditions that have remained alive and intact because of its roots being grounded in the highest spiritual reality. This is the benefit and the challenge for bringing back its relevancy to our life.

THE ARYAN INVASION THEORY

One of the next most insidious concepts that belittled the Vedic society was the idea that it did not start with the indigenous people of the Gangetic plains, but was brought to India from invaders that came from outside the region. After all, how could the people of India develop such sophisticated books as the Vedic literature before anything like that had been created in the West? So, the Aryan Invasion Theory was just what was needed to adjust that view.

Most scholars now discard the idea of an Aryan invasion. If such a large tribe of people had come in and wiped out the Harappan civilization, there should be more evidence that a great battle took place. There should also be more evidence of a pre-Aryan culture, such as its language, customs, philosophy, etc., all of which are missing. So there is not enough proof to make that case, such as large amounts of weapons

found, mass graves, or other such things. So how did such a theory develop?

It was Max Muller who in Britain was receiving subsidies from the India Office. He decided to advocate the idea that the Vedic culture, along with the Vedic texts, came into India through an invasion of the Aryans, the ruthless and nomadic tribes. He calculated that the invasion must have happened around 1500 BCE. However, he later admitted that it could have been earlier or later, he really could not be sure. Nonetheless, before Max Muller proposed this theory, there was never any argument over the authorship of the *Vedas*. They were accepted as a product of the indigenous people of Bharata Varsha, the area of India.

The premise for the Aryan Invasion Theory was that there was a perceived commonality amongst the words in the languages of the Old Greek, Gaulish, Irish, Welsh, Gothic, Latin, and others and Sanskrit. Thus, there had to have been a pre-Sanskrit, or "Indo-European" language, from which all these common words had arisen. Then those people who had used that language, particularly those near the Caspian Sea, migrated into Iran and then into India, bringing with them their culture. After arriving, they began to compose the Vedic texts. However, scholars still have not been able to find that Indo-European language.

The British used this theory for a number of reasons. One was that they could say that India was made up of people who had invaded India anyway, so their presence was nothing but a continuation of that migration. They were but fellow "Indo-Europeans" who had also come to India to do the same thing as the previous Aryans had done. The British would merely continue the civilizing process that had been started by their Aryan ancestors.

Another aspect that they used was to create a class of Aryans, or the northern and light-skinned higher classes of Indians, and separate them from the lower or darker-skinned people, who they labeled as Dravidians in the south. This itself was one of the insidious ideas that we will discuss. But the conclusion is that there is no justification of such classes. The word "Arya" or "Aryan" was never an ethnic group or race of people. It merely meant light or clear, as in people who were noble in their lives and clear in their spiritual development. They had a clear consciousness toward their attempts at understanding God and uplifting themselves spiritually. It never meant they were a separate type of people, or a separate class. This premise was merely the exploitation of the British. Evidence that shows there was never any Aryan invasion has been presented in my book "Proof of Vedic Culture's Global Existence", some of which I repeat as follows:

WAS THERE EVER AN ARYAN INVASION?

One of the major reasons why a consideration of the idea of an Aryan invasion into India is prevalent among some Western researchers is because of their misinterpretation of the *Vedas*, deliberate or otherwise, that suggests the Aryans were a nomadic people. One such misinterpretation is from the *Rig-veda*, which describes the battle between Sudas and the ten kings. The battle of the ten kings included the Pakthas, Bhalanas, Alinas, Shivas, Vishanins, Shimyus, Bhrigus, Druhyas, Prithus, and Parshus, who fought against the Tritsus. The Prithus or Parthavas became the Parthians of latter-day Iran (247 BCE–224 CE). The Parshus or Pashavas became the latter-day Persians. These kings, though some are described as Aryans, were actually fallen Aryans, or rebellious and materialistic kings who had given up the spiritual path and were conquered by Sudas. Occasionally, there was a degeneration of the spiritual kingdom in areas of India, and wars had to be fought in order to re-establish the spiritual Aryan or Dharmic culture in these areas. Western scholars could and did easily misinterpret this to mean an invasion of nomadic people called Aryans rather than simply a war in which the superior Aryan kings re-established the spiritual values and the Vedic Aryan way of life.

Let us also remember that the Aryan Invasion Theory was hypothesized in the nineteenth century to explain the similarities found in Sanskrit and the languages of Europe. One person who reported about this is Deen Chandora in his article, *Distorted Historical Events and Discredited Hindu Chronology,* as it appeared in *Revisiting Indus-Sarasvati Age and Ancient India* (p. 383). He explains that the idea of the Aryan invasion was certainly not a matter of misguided research, but was a conspiracy to distribute deliberate misinformation that was formulated on April 10, 1866 in London at a secret meeting held in the Royal Asiatic Society. This was "to induct the theory of the Aryan invasion of India, so that no Indian may say that English are foreigners. . . India was ruled all along by outsiders and so the country must remain a slave under the benign Christian rule." This was a political move and this theory was put to solid use in all schools and colleges.

So it was basically a linguistic theory adopted by the British colonial authorities to keep themselves in power. This theory suggested, more or less, that there was a race of superior, white Aryans who came in from the Caucasus Mountains and invaded the Indus region, and then established their culture, compiled their literature, and then proceeded to invade the rest of India.

As can be expected, most of those who were great proponents of the Aryan invasion theory were often ardent English and German nationalists, or Christians, ready and willing to bring about the desecration of anything that was non-Christian or non-European. Even Max Muller believed in the Christian chronology that the world was created at 9:00 AM on October 23, 4004 BCE, and the great flood occurred in 2500 BCE. Thus, it was impossible to give a date for the Aryan invasion earlier than 1500 BCE. After all, accepting the Christian time frame would force them to eliminate all other evidence and possibilities, so what else could they do? So, even this date for the Aryan invasion was based on speculation.

In this way, the Aryan invasion theory was created to make it appear that Indian culture and philosophy was dependent on the previous developments in Europe, thereby justifying the need for colonial rule and Christian expansion in India. This was also the purpose of the study of Sanskrit, such as at Oxford University in England, as indicated by Colonel Boden who sponsored the program. He stated that they should "promote Sanskrit learning among the English, so as 'to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion.'"

Unfortunately, this was also Max Muller's ultimate goal. In a letter to his wife in 1866, he wrote about his translation of the *Rig-veda*: "This edition of mine and the translation of the *Veda*, will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years." (*The Life and Letters of Right Honorable Friedrich Max Muller*, Vol. I. p.346)

So, in essence, the British used the theory of the Aryan invasion to further their "divide and conquer" policy. With civil unrest and regional cultural tensions created by the British through designations and divisions among the Indian society, it gave a reason and purpose for the British to continue and increase their control over India. However, under scrutiny, the Aryan invasion theory lacks justification. For example, Sir John Marshall, one of the chief excavators at Mohenjo-Daro, offers evidence that India may have been following the Vedic religion long before any so-called "invaders" ever arrived. He points out that it is known that India possessed a highly advanced and organized urban civilization dating back to at least 2300 BCE, if not much earlier. In fact, some researchers suggest that evidence makes it clear that the Indus Valley civilization was quite developed by at least 3100 BCE. The

known cities of this civilization cover an area along the Indus River and extend from the coast to Rajasthan and the Punjab over to the Yamuna and Upper Ganges. At its height, the Indus culture spread over 300,000 square miles, an area larger than Western Europe. Cities that were a part of the Indus culture include Mohenjo-Daro, Kot Diji east of Mohenjo-Daro, Amri on the lower Indus, Lothal south of Ahmedabad, Malwan farther south, Harappa 350 miles upstream from Mohenjo-Daro, Kalibangan and Alamgirpur farther east, Rupar near the Himalayas, Sutkagen Dor to the west along the coast, Mehrgarh 150 miles north of Mohenjo-Daro, and Mundigak much farther north. Evidence at Mehrgarh shows a civilization that dates back to 6500 BCE. It had been connected with the Indus culture but was deserted in the third millennium BCE around the time the city of Mohenjo-Daro became prominent.

The arrangement of these cities and the knowledge of the residents was much superior to that of any immigrating nomads, except for military abilities at the time. A lack of weapons, except for thin spears, at these cities indicates they were not very well equipped militarily. Thus, one theory is that if there were invaders, whoever they may have been, rather than encouraging the advancement of Vedic society when they came into the Indus Valley region, they may have helped stifle it or even caused its demise in certain areas. The Indus Valley locations may have been one area where the Vedic society disappeared after the arrival of these invaders. Many of these cities seemed to have been abandoned quickly, while others were not. However, some geologists suggest that the cities were left because of environmental changes. Evidence of floods in the plains is seen in the thick layers of silt which are now thirty-nine feet above the river in the upper strata of Mohenjo-Daro. Others say that the ecological needs of the community forced the people to move on, since research shows there was a great reduction in rainfall from that period to the present.

We also have to remember that many of the Indus sites, like Kalibangan, were close to the region of the old Sarasvati River. Some Hindu scholars are actually preferring to rename the Indus Valley culture as the Indus-Sarasvati culture because the Sarasvati was a prominent river and very important at the time. For example, the Sarasvati River is glowingly praised in the *Rig-veda*. However, the Sarasvati River stopped flowing and later dried up. Recent scientific studies calculate that the river stopped flowing as early as around 8000 BCE. It dried up near the end of the Indus Valley civilization, at least by 1900 BCE. This was no doubt one reason why these cities were abandoned. This also means that if the Vedic people came after the Indus Valley culture, they could not

have known of the Sarasvati River. This is further evidence that the *Vedas* were from many years before the time of the Indus Valley society and were not brought into the region by some invasion.

As a result of the latest studies, evidence points in the direction that the Indus sites were wiped out not by acts of war or an invasion, but by the drought that is known to have taken place and continued for 300 years. Whatever skeletons that have been found in the region may indicate deaths not by war but by starvation or lack of water. Deaths of the weak by starvation are normal before the whole society finally moves away for better lands and more abundant resources. This is the same drought that wiped out the Akkadians of Sumeria, and caused a sudden abandonment of cities in Mesopotamia, such as at Tell Leilan and Tell Brock. The beginning of the end of these civilizations had to have been near 2500 BCE. This drought no doubt contributed to the final drying up of the Sarasvati River.

Regarding Mohenjo-Daro, archeologists have discovered no sign of attack, such as extensive burning, or remains of armour-clad warriors, and no foreign weapons. This leaves us to believe that the enemy of the people in this region was nature, such as earthquakes, flooding, or the severe drought, or even a change in the course of rivers, and not warrior invaders. So again, the invasion theory does not stand up to scrutiny from the anthropological point of view.

The best known archeological sites of the Indus cities are Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Excavation work at Mohenjo-Daro was done from 1922 to 1931 and 1935 to 1936. Excavation at Harappa took place from 1920 to 1921 and 1933 to 1934. Evidence has shown that temples played an important part in the life of the residents of these cities. The citadel at Mohenjo-Daro contains a 39-by-23 foot bath. This seems to have been used for ceremonial purposes similar in the manner that many large temple complexes in India also have central pools for bathing and rituals. Though deities have not been found in the ruins, no doubt because they were too important to abandon, images of a Mother goddess and a Male god similar to Lord Shiva sitting in a yoga posture have been found. Some of the Shiva seals show a man with three heads and an erect phallus, sitting in meditation and surrounded by animals. This would be Shiva as Pashupati, lord or friend of the animals. Representations of the *lingam* of Shiva and *yoni* of his spouse have also been easily located, as well as non-phallic stones such as the *shalagram-shila* stone of Lord Vishnu. Thus, the religions of Shiva and Vishnu, which are directly Vedic, had been very much a part of this society long

ago and were not brought to the area by any invaders who may have arrived later.

Another point that helps convince that the Vedic religion and culture had to have been there in India and pre-Harappan times is the sacrificial altars that have been discovered at the Harappan sites. These are all of similar design and found from Baluchistan to Uttar Pradesh, and down into Gujarat. This shows that the whole of this area must have been a part of one specific culture, the Vedic culture, which had to have been there before these sites were abandoned.

More information in this regard is found in an article by J. F. Jarrige and R. H. Meadow in the August, 1980 issue of *Scientific American* called "The Antecedents of Civilization in the Indus Valley." In the article they mention that recent excavations at Mehrgarh show that the antecedents of the Indus Valley culture go back earlier than 6000 BCE in India. An outside influence did not affect its development. Astronomical references established in the *Vedas* do indeed concur with the date of Mehrgarh. Therefore, sites such as Mehrgarh reflect the earlier Vedic age of India. Thus, we have a theory of an Aryan invasion which is not remembered by the people of the area that were supposed to have been conquered by the Aryans.

Furthermore, Dr. S. R. Rao has deciphered the Harappan script to be of an Indo-Aryan base. In fact, he has shown how the South Arabic, Old Aramic, and the ancient Indian Brahmi scripts are all derivatives of the Indus Valley script. This new evidence confirms that the Harappan civilization could not have been Dravidians that were overwhelmed by an Aryan invasion, but they were followers of the Vedic religion. The irony is that the invasion theory suggests that the Vedic Aryans destroyed the Dravidian Indus townships which had to have been previously built according to the mathematical instructions that are found in the Vedic literature of the Aryans, such as the *Shulbasutras*. This point helps void the invasion theory. After all, if the people of these cities used the Vedic styles of religious altars and town planning, it would mean they were already Aryans.

In a similar line of thought in another recent book, *Vedic Glossary on Indus Seals*, Dr. Natwar Jha has provided an interpretation of the ancient script of the numerous recovered seals of the Indus Valley civilization. He has concluded that the Indus Valley seals, which are small soapstone, one-inch squares, exhibit a relation to the ancient form of Brahmi. He found words on the seals that come from the ancient *Nighantu* text, which is a glossary of Sanskrit compiled by the sage Yaksa that deals with words of subordinate Vedic texts. An account of

Yaksa's search for older Sanskrit words is found in the *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. This may have been in relation to the Indus Valley seals and certainly shows its ancient Vedic connection.

The point of all this is that the entire *Rig-veda* had to have been existing for thousands of years by the time the Indus Valley seals were produced. Therefore, the seals were of Vedic Sanskrit origin or a derivative of it, and the Indus Valley sites were part of the Vedic culture. This is further evidence that there was no Aryan invasion. No Aryan invasion means that the area and its residents were already a part of the Vedic empire. This also means that the so-called Indo-Aryan or Indo-European civilization was nothing but the worldwide Vedic culture. From this we can also conclude, therefore, that the so-called Indo-Aryan group of languages is nothing but the various local mispronunciations of Sanskrit which has pervaded the civilized world for thousands of years.

Another interesting point is that skeletal remains found in the Harappan sites that date back to 4000 years ago show the same basic racial types in the Punjab and Gujarat as found today. This verifies that no outside race invaded and took over the area. The only west to east movement that took place was after the Sarasvati went dry, and that was involving the people who were already there. In this regard, Sir John Marshall, in charge of the excavations at the Harappan sites, said that the Indus civilization was the oldest to be unearthed, even older than the Sumerian culture, which is believed to be but a branch of the former, and, thus, an outgrowth of the Vedic society.

One more point about skeletal remains at the Harappan sites is that bones of horses are found at all levels of these locations. Thus, the horse was well known to these people. The horse was mentioned in the *Rig-veda*, and was one of the main animals of Vedic culture in India. However, according to records in Mesopotamia, the horse was unknown to that region until only about 2100 BCE. So this provides further proof that the direction of movement by the people was from India to the west, not the other way around as the invasion theory suggests.

Professor Lal has written a book, *The Earliest Civilization of South Asia*, in which he also has concluded that the theory of an Aryan invasion has no basis. An invasion is not the reason for the destruction of the Harappan civilization. It was caused by climactic changes. He says the Harappan society was a melting pot made up of people from the Mediterranean, Armenia, the Alpine area, and even China. They engaged in typical Vedic fire worship, *ashwamedha* rituals. Such fire altars have been found in the Indus Valley cities of Banawali, Lothal, and Kalibangan.

He also explains that the city of Kalibangan came to ruin when the Saraswati River dried up, caused by severe climactic changes around 1900 BCE. Thus, the mention of the Sarasvati River also helps date the *Vedas*, which had to have existed before this. This would put the origin of Sanskrit writing and the earliest portions of Vedic literature at least sometime before 4000 BCE, 6000 years ago.

In conclusion, V. Gordon Childe states in his book, *The Aryans*, that though the idea of an Asiatic origin of the Aryans, who then migrated into India, is the most widely accepted idea, it is still the least well documented. And this idea is only one of the unfounded generalizations with which for over seventy years anthropology and archeology have been in conflict. In fact, today the northern Asiatic origin of the Aryans is a hypothesis which has been abandoned by most linguists and archeologists.

More on this discussion can be found in my book, "Proof of Vedic Culture's Global Existence."

* * *

So, the conclusion is that many people have put time and energy into analyzing the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), which has turned out merely to have been a product of mental speculation, a hoax in an attempt to show the less than superior nature and talents of the indigenous people of the area. Therefore, all this argument and counter argument both for and against the AIT has been less than useful, a distraction if anything, an exercise of the intellect, except for putting this whole idea to rest once and for all. It has all been for misleading people from the truth. Thus, we can return to the traditional fact of the matter that the Vedic Aryan civilization migrated and spread out to the west and east from the area of present day India, and not the other way around.

THE TERMS "ARYAN" AND "DRAVIDIAN"

This deserves special attention, but the difference in terminology of Aryan and Dravidian was used as a racial discriminatory factor by Western historians, started by the British, to coincide with the Aryan Invasion Theory. The term "Aryan" was regarded as a reference to someone who was noble or wise, someone living the Vedic lifestyle. It was used only 33 times in the whole of the *Rig-veda* for this purpose. It can also be found in Buddhist and Jain texts, where it became used more

often, and then later Sanskrit texts. But it was never used as an indicator of a separate people or ethnic lass.

The term "Dravidian" was never used in the Indian tradition as anything but a geographical connotation. It was again only used by the British to establish a lower class of Indians who were oppressed by the higher class Aryans. This whole conception was created to help the British divide the Indian people into quarreling factions, which helped the British have a reason to continue their rule of India. Before this, there was never any trace of a struggle between any such class of people known as the "Dravidians" and the "Aryans."

The Vedic social system was that anyone could rise to the position of an Aryan by adopting the principles advocated in the Vedic texts for spiritually uplifting one's consciousness. It was never a separate category of people, but mostly a lifestyle and a matter of adopting the necessary principles in one's life. As long as there was the divisions of "Aryan" and "non-Aryan" cultures, then the terms "Aryan" and "Dravidian" would always indicate racial separation, which is completely false. Thus, this idea of "Aryan" and "Dravidian" people as separate races of people is another insidious concept.

THE PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE

Another insidious idea to destroy the credibility of Vedic culture and its texts was by Sir William Jones in 1786. This was the fabrication of the idea of a protolanguage that was called the Indo-European language that was supposed to be the original language from which Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin was derived. Even though this protolanguage was now extinct, this was to be considered the mother of all languages, thus making Sanskrit just another language developed from something else. However, the problem was that Sir Jones could never produce any real evidence of his theory. Obviously, that is all it was, a theory, but it was taken seriously and stuck with many scholars for years without any further proof of its authenticity. This went against the conclusions of previous linguists before Jones who felt that Sanskrit was indeed the original language of the world. The Divine origination of Sanskrit was also part of the Vedic tradition.

Nonetheless, Franz Bopp continued this idea of the "Proto-Indo-European" language in his work from 1833 to 1852. Others also took this idea and ran with it, which made it even more ingrained in the minds of anyone considering the topic of linguistics. Yet, they were mostly just

using the premise of William Jones without any additional and credible reasoning. And still there is no substance to say what could have possibly been that Indo-European language. It was merely another attempt to demean and belittle the profound nature of the great Vedic culture.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

The present-day caste system is but a perverted and disfigured form of the ancient Vedic system known as Varnashrama. The Varna system was a means of identifying one's proclivities and natural tendencies to a particular set of occupations that the individual would most likely find to his liking and ability. There were the Brahmanas (priests and intellectuals, those who practiced and preserved the Vedic rituals and processes of spiritual realization), the Kshatriyas (warriors, military, government administrators), Vaishyas (the merchants, bankers, farmers, etc.), and the Shudras (common laborers, musicians, dancers, etc.). The ashramas were the stages of life, such as the Brahmachari (celibate students), Grihastha (the married couples or householder life), Vanaprastha (retired stage), and Sannyasa (the renounced stage).

Naturally, everyone has a particular mindset and consciousness that gives him or her an interest in a set of occupational activities. This would be considered while the student was in school, and then the proper curriculum would be suggested and arranged. It was never something that was determined by one's birth, or *jati*. To say one is a doctor because his father is a doctor is ridiculous. Regardless of birth, one must be trained properly to become a doctor. Similarly, the idea that one is naturally a Brahmana merely because he is born to a Brahmana is not accurate. Because one's father is of a certain occupation, the child may be born into a privileged situation to learn that skill or occupation, but he still must be trained. But birth itself, which is how the modern caste system works, is never the sole qualifier for one's occupation, and certainly not an indicator of what one's consciousness will be. That must be determined by one's actions and interests. In Varnashrama, a person could change their occupation and profession as the qualifications changed. That was the social mobility that was allowed in the Vedic system that is greatly deterred by the modern day caste system.

As time moved on, it seems that the Brahmanas closed that form of social mobility by assuring that their children would be called Brahmanas, and those of the other *varnas*, such as the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, would not be able to move upward from their

family designation. In that case, one had to be born in a Brahmana family to ever qualify as a Brahmana. It became a tradition that Brahmanas would not teach the Vedic texts and knowledge to anyone of the lower *varnas*, especially the Shudras. This became increasingly rigid with time, though social mobility for other forms of occupational training was still prevalent. However, some Brahmanas were more liberal and supplied the sacred knowledge to many others, regardless of class. In fact, Srila Vyasadeva, the compiler of the most important of Vedic texts, wrote the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* primarily for the good of all humanity. This *Bhagavatam* was considered his ultimate commentary on all Vedic knowledge.

So the British and Christian missionaries used this caste system to help divide the Indian people ever more so for their own purposes, thus making the caste system even more rigid in society. They would provoke the lower castes and the indigenous tribals by telling them that they were the original people of the land, before the Aryans and Dravidians, who forcibly entered their land and ruled over them to this day, keeping them in the lower rungs of society. You will now find that even the Indian history books contain versions of this insidious theory.

In this way, the missionaries managed to arouse the hatred of the lower castes for the Brahmanas, who have always been the prime preservers of the Vedic culture, and the British used it to facilitate their divide and rule policy. This kept quarreling factions in Indian society at a maximum, and, thus, also kept them too weak to unite enough to overcome their real exploiter, the British. It also gave the missionaries the means to promise the lower castes that if they joined them by being Christians, they could overcome their apparent caste limitations and be equal with all other converted Christians. However, that has not been the case. Caste has been prevalent even in the churches, which is why many Hindus who have converted to Christianity are returning to their Vedic roots, and reconverting to be Hindus. The Muslims also used this caste designation to help them make converts.

The way the caste system is in use today, it is probably one of the greatest obstacles to the unity of the country. Not only are there the four *varnas*, but now there are hundreds of subcastes, each with its own set of occupations or rules that they follow. Specific provisions are also now addressed in the Indian Constitution for Scheduled Castes, so certain aspects of the present day caste system are now perpetuated and even more solidified by the rule of law. Some of this is an attempt to abolish the unjust treatment of those called “untouchables” or *dalits*, which is a positive act in my view, but the concept of caste divisions

seems to remain. Thus, the caste system as we find it today is one of the most insidious ideas and greatest impediments to progress in Indian society.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Casteism: Is It the Scourge of Hinduism, or the Perversion of a Legitimate Vedic System?

Casteism in India has gotten a lot of criticism, and rightly so. The way casteism is at present should not even exist. We should throw it out. Casteism as we find it today is now nothing more than a misrepresentation and misinterpretation of a legitimate and progressive Vedic system known as varnashrama. However, we need to know the difference between the two, then get rid of present-day casteism to again utilize the genuine and liberal form of social organization, known as *varnashrama*.

WHAT CASTEISM IS TODAY

The casteism that we find today is the materialistic form of designation that has become a way of oppressing the lower social orders of people. It says that if you are born in a family of a certain classification, then you are of the same class with little possibility of changing. In casteism, birth is now the major factor in determining one's social standing. It dictates that your social order, occupational potential and characteristics are the same as your parents, which is a label that may have been placed on a family hundreds of years ago.

In the Vedic system, there were four basic classifications. There were the Brahmanas (priests and intellectuals, those who practiced and preserved the Vedic rituals and processes of spiritual realization), the Kshatriyas (warriors, military, government administrators), Vaishyas (the merchants, bankers, farmers, etc.), and the Shudras (common laborers, musicians, dancers, etc.). Casteism says that if you are born of a

Brahmana family, then you are a Brahmana, no matter whether you truly exhibit the genuine characteristics of a Brahmana or not. And if you are also born in a Kshatriya family, or a Vaishya or Shudra family, then that is what you must be. It is as if when one is born in a doctor's family, the child is also considered a doctor. However, anyone knows that to become a doctor requires the proper training and perception to see if the child will be a qualified doctor or not. Just being born in the family of a doctor does not mean that the children will also be doctors, although this may help. But they surely are not doctors merely by birth. Training and intelligence must be there. And before training, there also must be the proclivity, tendency, and attraction to even be a doctor. Without that, no amount of training will be of much use because the student will still not want to be, or qualify to be a doctor. Therefore, this form of modern day casteism is useless.

This form of materialistic casteism was practiced five hundred years ago, during the time of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who was considered an *avatara* of the Supreme Being. However, Sri Caitanya paid no mind to these social customs. He saw them as a way that the hereditary Brahmanas were merely protecting their own position and privileges and not spreading spiritual well-being, which is their real duty. Even during that time the Brahmanas had the idea that if they ate with or touched anyone outside the Brahmana caste, they would risk losing their own social rank. Sri Caitanya, however, ignored such restrictions and readily accepted invitations to eat with the sincere devotees of the Lord, or also embrace them, even if they were of the lowest social position. To Sri Caitanya, it was their devotion that gave them whatever qualification they needed. In this way, He dismissed the materialistic method of casteism. By this action He also showed that it was not birth that was important, but one's consciousness, intentions, and spiritual awareness that was the prominent factor, which superseded the rank of one's body or family. It is this which actually determines one's personality, character, and abilities, not merely one's birth. This is actually how we should see people and treat them equally as spiritual beings inside material bodies.

WHAT IS THE ORIGINAL VEDIC SYSTEM CALLED VARNASHRAMA.

The original Vedic system called *varnashrama* was legitimate and virtuous. It was meant for the progressive organization of society.

Varnashrama is the Vedic system that divides society into four natural groups depending on individual characteristics and dispositions. Everyone has certain tendencies by their own natural inclinations and choice. These inclinations are also seen in one's occupational preferences. These activities are divided into four basic divisions called *varnas*. *Varna* literally means color, relating to the color or disposition of one's consciousness, and, thus, one's likelihood of preferring or showing various tendencies for a particular set of occupations. This would be determined not by one's birth, but by one's proclivities as observed by the teachers in the school that the student was attending.

For example, there are those who prefer to offer service to society through physical labor or working for others, or through various forms of expressions like dance and music (called Shudras); those who serve through agriculture, trade, commerce, business, and banking or administrative work (Vaishyas); those who have the talents of leaders, government administration, police or military, and the protection of society (Kshatriyas); and those who are by nature intellectuals, contemplative, and inspired by acquiring spiritual and philosophical knowledge, and motivated to work in this way for the rest of society (the Brahmanas). It was never a factor of whether a person had a certain ancestry or birth that determined which class was most appropriate for him or her, although being born in a particular family or tribe would give a natural likelihood to continue in the same line of activity.

Ashramas divided society for spiritual reasons. These were Brahmacharya (students), Grihasthas (householders), Vanaprasthas (the retired stage, at which time a person begins to give up materialistic pursuits and focus on spiritual goals), and Sannyasa (those who were renounced from all materialistic affairs, usually toward the end of their lives, and completely dedicated to spiritual activities). This provided a general pattern for one's life in which people could work out their desires and develop spiritually at the same time.

In this way, the system of *varnashrama* came into existence according to the natural tendencies of people, and to direct them so that everyone could work together according to the needs of society. The *ashramas* divided an individual's life so that a person could fulfill all of one's basic desires as well as accomplish the spiritual goals of life. Only according to one's qualities, tendencies, and traits, usually as one grew up in school, was it determined which *varna* was best for that person. And then he would be trained accordingly to do the most suited work that fit his qualities, much like the way counselors work with students in

schools today. Thus, he or she would have a suitable occupation which he would enjoy, and make a respectable contribution to society.

Its real purpose was that the system of *varnashrama* was not to label or restrict someone. It was actually part of the means for self-discovery and development. It was to assist a person to find their place in life where he or she would be most comfortable in terms of functionality and occupation. It was to allow the means for everyone to work according to their own nature, which helps bring happiness to the individual and society. Thus, a person could study what was most suited for him or her rather than pursue a type of work that was not really in line with that person's character, and in which he would soon be dissatisfied. So, it would help guide one to more efficiently complete one's life and reach fulfillment. In this way, the *varnashrama* system is based on the natural divisions within society and is not meant to establish forced distinctions or restrictions.

However, beyond this it was meant to help raise the consciousness of humanity from materialism to a higher state of devotional regard for God in spiritual life. It would help one in managing the physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual energy for improving one's health, mental and physical development, and productivity, along with spiritual awareness. Thus, it was meant for helping society to become spiritually harmonized and make the everyday tasks into a means of spiritual progress and growth.

To explain further, in *Bhagavad-gita* (4.13) Lord Krishna says, "According to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me." Then He continues, "Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are distinguished by their qualities of work in accordance with the modes of nature." (*Bg*.18.41) Herein we can see that there is no mention of birth as a determining factor for one's *varna* or classification. They are ascertained by their qualities of work. Furthermore, "By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect. . . By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, man can, in the performance of his own duty [or occupation], attain perfection." (*Bg*.18.45-6)

Herein we can understand that these divisions are created by the Lord so that everyone can be rightly situated in the work and activities that are most suitable for each person, and in which they can feel most comfortable. Whatever occupational tendency a person may have is determined by the modes of material nature one has acquired, or in which he or she associates. Beyond this, these classifications are to

organize society in a way that can help in the systematic development of the spiritual consciousness of all mankind.

In the *Vishnu Purana* (3.8.9) Lord Parasharama also says, "The Supreme Lord Vishnu is worshiped by the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of *varna* and *ashrama*. There is no other way to satisfy the Lord." So, by engaging in this *varnashrama* system the Supreme Lord can be satisfied with one's occupation. It is a way of making one's work and activities into devotional service to the Lord. However, it may be pointed out that a person in pure spiritual consciousness is above all such designations, even though for his service to God he may act in any one of these divisions at any given time. Devotional service to the Lord is never restricted by any classification of actions. Any activity becomes completely spiritual when it is an expression of one's devotion or love of God.

Now we can understand how the Vedic arrangement of *varnashrama* provides the means for each person in each *varna* to be able to make spiritual advancement by offering one's activities to the Lord. It is the way a person can directly engage in bhakti-yoga, or devotional service to the Supreme. Thus, in whatever position one is in, all of one's duties can become an offering of love to God, which becomes the highest level of meditation, intention, or activity.

If everyone engages their talents and tendencies in his or her particular occupation with the idea that it is a service to God, then that occupation becomes the means for one's worship and thoughts or meditation on the Supreme. If one thinks like this always, then, by the grace of the Lord, he will be delivered from material existence. This is the highest perfection of life. In whatever occupation people may be engaged, if they serve the Supreme Lord, they will achieve this highest level of success. It is by this means that the spiritual form of *varnashrama* can satisfy the Lord, and everyone makes spiritual advancement. As society progresses in this way, all working together for the satisfaction of the Lord, they forget who is in what position, or that there seems to be a difference, because spiritually they are all transcendental. Thus, everyone rises above the material platform by dint of their spiritual work in devotional service. Then the harmonious and advanced nature of the mode of goodness, as found in the age of Satya-yuga, can be invoked even in this dark age of Kali-yuga.

The system of *varnashrama* exists naturally everywhere because people will always have the tendencies for what they want to do, or have particular qualities for occupational skills. And these can invariably be divided into the four above-mentioned groups. This is natural, and, as we

have seen the evidence here, it has been formed by the Supreme Creator. Therefore, it will always be in existence in some shape or form.

This system, however, was never meant to divide people according to materialistic classifications. It was meant to unite people in a cooperative society in the service of God. In Vedic times, even the Shudras had the same rights as those of the other *varnas*, and their dignity was preserved without discrimination. In this way, everyone would be satisfied materially and work in a way for the Lord's pleasure. The Vedic culture, ultimately, was for the well-being and spiritual advancement of the whole society. Forced designation or untouchability was never a part of the Vedic process. The materialistic system of the present-day casteism has deteriorated into a means of dividing society according to mere parentage to control certain groups, while protecting or expanding the worldly happiness of the privileged. Thus, additional groups have been manufactured to accommodate this, such as those who are described as outcastes or "untouchables". Actually, there is no word as "untouchable" in any of the Vedic scriptures. This is merely a modern invention.

Logically speaking, if a person is not performing any unhygienic activities, then why should he be called a Dalit, or an untouchable, simply because of the family in which he was born? Even after performing something dirty, one need only wash oneself properly to be clean again. Likewise, to raise one's consciousness to a higher awareness or frequency of activity, one need only participate in the Vedic methods of spiritual advancement, which must be done regardless of one's rank or *varna*, whether Shudra or Brahmana.

On the other hand, I have seen Brahmanas in India who ate eggs, ate meat, and drank alcohol, all considered to be dirty or contaminating things. How does one clean oneself from that if he is considered a clean and pure Brahmana? It means that such a person is hardly a Brahmana at all, even if he is born in a Brahmana family. So classification is to be judged by qualities, habits, and the content of one's character, not by mere title and birth.

So, as it stands today, the present form of casteism is a great curse on Hinduism. It attacks the core of its spiritual philosophy, and has resulted in large numbers of Hindus converting to other religions in an attempt to become free of it. Therefore, it needs to be replaced by the genuine system of *varnashrama*, or simply thrown out completely. However, there are groups or spiritual institutions of Vedic followers who have set the proper example and are open to everyone, and do not divide people or consider them according to their birth. The members all

view each other as equals working together for spiritual cooperation and advancement.

In the *Bhagavad-gita* (18.42), Lord Krishna explains that the natural qualities of the Brahmanas are peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, and knowledge. The *Mahabharata* also explains that a Brahmana must be perfectly religious. He must be truthful and able to control his senses. He must execute severe austerities and be detached, humble, and tolerant. He must not envy anyone, and must be expert in performing religious sacrifices and giving whatever he has in charity. He must be fixed in devotional service and expert in Vedic knowledge. These are the twelve qualifications for a Brahmana. The *Mahabharata* (Vana Parva, Chapter 180) also goes on with a quote from Yudhisthira, that a Brahmana possesses truthfulness, charity, forgiveness, sobriety, gentleness, austerity, and a lack of hatred.

So the point is that, unfortunately, in today's form of casteism, when we see Brahmanas who are proud of their position, or who desire material benefit, or look condescendingly at those of lower castes, they are not really elevated but are materialistic. This means that they have lost the true qualities of Brahmanas. They actually help promote contempt throughout casteism. Thus, for those that act this way, and not all of them do, only by birth are they called Brahmanas, but the necessary qualifications are not found in them. In fact, the very people that may pride themselves for their high social classifications, and are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of society (the Brahmanas), only indicate their lack of qualifications by focusing on the temporary material designations when they are supposed to be above such things.

A final point in this regard comes from Suta Gosvami who says in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.2.8) that such occupational duties a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This means that the modern materialistic form of casteism that we find today is no longer connected with the Vedic system of *varnashrama*. It misses the point of helping everyone make spiritual advancement by focusing on our spiritual identity of being the soul within the body, or to please the Supreme Lord. Thus, the caste system has become simply a materialistic, useless, and destructive arrangement.

THE EARLIEST REFERENCE TO THE VARNAS

The earliest reference to the *varnas* is found in the Purusha Sukta verses of the *Rig-veda* (Book Ten, Hymn 90). There are those who refer to these verses as justification for the caste system. But let us take a closer look at them.

In these verses, the great sages worship the Purusha, or the Supreme Soul, Lord of immortality, and from whom the universe is created. In worshiping the Purusha, whose form is completely spiritual and transcendental, the sages can see how all other aspects of the creation are also manifest. Within Him are all other deities and demigods and rishis. From this ritual, all other *Richas* and *Sama* hymns are born from the Purusha, and from Him come all other creatures, and animals, and so on. Then this hymn explains that from the Purusha's mouth, arms, thighs, and feet come the human beings. The Brahmana was His mouth, the Rajas or Kshatriyas were both of His arms, His thighs became the Vaishyas, and from His feet the Shudras were produced.

After that it is described how the Moon was gendered from his mind [connecting its affects with mental activities], and the sun came from His eye [providing vision]. Indra and Agni also came from His mouth and Vayu [the wind god] came from His breath. From His navel came mid-air, sky from His head, Earth from His feet, and regions from His ear.

Thus, we find that a variety of items are identified with parts of His body. However, this does not mean that there is a classificational difference between what is lower and what is higher. It mostly distinguishes the different functions of each entity in its association with the various parts of the Purusha. The Purusha's or Lord's body is completely spiritual. For those that do not understand this point, it means that there is no difference between His head, hand, thighs, feet, mind, breath, eye, ear, and so on. They are made of the same spiritual qualities, and one aspect can perform the same function as any other aspect. They are all pure consciousness. Thus, it does not mean that the Brahmanas are necessarily a higher classification than the Vaishyas or Shudras, but that they naturally have different functions. However, the point is that every living being is considered a part of the Lord's body. As verse three of the Purusha Sukta explains, all creatures are one-fourth of Him. In other words, they all have a place, they all belong, and they all have a duty to perform, and should be respected as such. It means that they all have a purpose, in that all parts of the body must work together. In this way, the social body of society must all work together in order for it to function

properly and harmoniously. Being parts of the spiritual body of the Purusha, all living beings are also ultimately completely spiritual in essence. That essence is what we must understand, for that essence is of the same essential spiritual quality as the Lord. That is what connects us all together and with God.

Another aspect of this is that in the Second verse of the Purusha Sukta Prayers, it explains that the Purusha expands with food. This food is indicative of the worship, the sacrificial offerings or meditative devotions of mankind. Thus, for society to reach its zenith of spiritual potential, they must all cooperate in working together in devotion to God. This means that society, being different parts of the body of God, must all act while having God as the center, just as our own body must work to serve the central part of it, which is the stomach. If the feet, legs, arms, and head do not cooperate to feed the stomach, then the whole body, including all its parts, get weak and dysfunctional, and then dies. It does not matter which part may be considered the most important, if they do not all work to make sure the stomach is fed, then they all get weak and die. In the same way, the different parts of the body of society must all work together or it becomes weak and begins to die out.

So, as explained in this prayer, the body of the Purusha expands and grows strong when all of its parts, namely mankind, work for the common cause, which is to cooperate together, seeing each person as part of the body of God, and act in devotion to the Lord. That is the ultimate goal, as emphasized in the Vedic tradition. In other words, you cannot please God if, by perceiving our differences, we do not act harmoniously together with God as the center. These are but a few of the lessons we can get from the Purusha Sukta Prayers in the *Rig-veda*. Now we must act on them and recognize each other in the proper perspective.

HOW THE PRESENT CASTEISM DEVELOPED

In the Vedic times it was perfectly all right for a person to change their classification or *varna* by switching their profession. It provided that kind of flexibility. Thus, on occasion, the upper class Brahmanas might become warriors or kings, while the lower class Shudras could also become scholars or saints. However, only later did the divisions of the four *varnas* become less flexible, thus causing one's birth to be one's class.

Over time the fourfold *varna* system became divided into many hundreds and thousands of other *varnas*, castes or *jatis*. Most of such

jatis are people of a particular geographical or linguistic region. Thus, each member within a *varna* would often act accordingly and marry amongst others within that *varna*. However, Kshatriyas were often excluded from such nuances.

So how did the form of casteism that we find today develop? Traditionally, it is related in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.18.32-50): "Once upon a time [about 5000 years ago] Maharaja Pariksit, while engaged in hunting in the forest with bow and arrows, became extremely fatigued, hungry and thirsty while following the stags. While searching for a reservoir of water, he entered the hermitage of the well-known Shamika Rishi and saw the sage sitting silently with eyes closed. The muni's sense organs, breath, mind and intelligence were all restrained from material activities, and he was situated in a trance apart from the three [wakefulness, dream, and unconsciousness], having achieved a transcendental position qualitatively equal with the Supreme Absolute.

"The sage, in meditation, was covered by the skin of a stag, and long, compressed hair was scattered all over him. The King, whose palate was dry from thirst, asked him for water. The King, not received by any formal welcome by means of being offered a seat, place, water and sweet addresses, considered himself neglected, and so thinking in this way, he became angry. The King's anger and envy, directed toward the Brahmana sage, were unprecedented, being that circumstances had made him hungry and thirsty.

"While leaving, the King, being so insulted, picked up a lifeless snake with his bow and angrily placed it on the shoulder of the sage. Then he returned to his palace. Upon returning, he began to contemplate and argue within himself whether the sage had actually been in meditation, with senses concentrated and eyes closed, or whether he had just been feigning trance just to avoid receiving a lower Kshatriya [meaning someone lower in *varna* or caste].

"The sage had a son, Shringi, who was very powerful, being a Brahmana's son. While he was playing with inexperienced boys, he heard of his father's distress, which was caused by the King. Then and there the boy spoke as follows: 'O just look at the sins of the rulers who, like crows and watchdogs at the door, perpetrate sins against their masters, contrary to the principles governing servants. The descendants of the kingly orders are definitely designated as watchdogs, and they must keep themselves at the door. On what grounds can dogs enter the house and claim to dine with the master on the same plate? After the departure of Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead and supreme ruler of everyone, these upstarts have flourished, our protector being gone.

Therefore, I myself shall take up this matter and punish them. Just witness my power.'

"The son of the rishi, his eyes red-hot with anger, touched the water of the river Kaushika while speaking to his playmates and discharged the following thunderbolt of words and cursed the King: 'On the seventh day from today a snake-bird will bite the most wretched one of that dynasty [Maharaja Pariksit] because of his having broken the laws of etiquette by insulting my father.'

"Thereafter, when the boy returned to the hermitage, he saw a snake on his father's shoulder, and out of his grief he cried very loudly. The rishi, born in the family of Angira Muni, gradually opened his eyes hearing his son crying, and saw the dead snake around his neck. He threw the dead snake away [thinking nothing of it] and asked his son why he was crying, whether anyone had done him any harm. On hearing this, the son explained to him what had happened.

"The father heard from his son that the King had been cursed, although he should never have been condemned, for he was the best amongst all human beings. The rishi did not congratulate his son, but, on the contrary, began to repent, saying: 'Alas! What a great sinful act was performed by my son. He has awarded heavy punishment for an insignificant offense. O my boy, your intelligence is immature, and therefore you have no knowledge that the king, who is the best amongst human beings, is as good as the Personality of Godhead. He is never to be placed on an equal footing with common men. The citizens of the state live in prosperity, being protected by his unsurpassable prowess.

"My dear boy, the Lord, who carries the wheel of a chariot, is represented by the monarchical regime, and when this regime is abolished the whole world becomes filled with thieves, who then at once vanquish the unprotected subjects like scattered lambs. Due to the termination of the monarchical regimes, and the plundering of the people's wealth by rogues and thieves, there will be great social disruptions. People will be killed and injured, and animals and women will be stolen. And for all these sins, we [the Brahmana class] shall be responsible.

"At that time the people in general will fall systematically from the path of a progressive civilization [the Vedic culture] in respect to the qualitative engagements of the castes and the orders of society and the Vedic instructions. Thus, they will be more attracted to economic development for sense gratification, and as a result there will be an unwanted population on the level of dogs and monkeys."

This was an arrangement by the Lord, or providence if you will, so that Maharaja Pariksit would depart from home and prepare to leave his body. However, Shringi, the powerful yet immature Brahmana boy, came under the lower influences of Kali-yuga, such as pride and envy, which a Brahmana is never meant to feel. It was through this incident that the degrading age of Kali-yuga was waiting for to spoil the Vedic cultural heritage of the four orders or *varnas* of life. It was this incident which was the first time, through an unqualified Brahmana boy, that the higher castes felt dislike or hatred for the lower castes. Thus, the first victim of Brahminical injustice was Maharaja Pariksit.

By the influence of Kali-yuga, the son of a Brahmana, under the influence of his young playmates, became proud of the power he had and wrongly compared a qualified king to crows and watchdogs. Thus, the downfall of the Brahminical powers started as the Brahmanas began to give more importance to birthright than to culture. In this way, the protection that was provided by the King against the onslaught of Kali-yuga became slackened, and, thereafter, all of the other castes or *varnas*, all the people in general, began to neglect their duties and lose qualifications. Thus, the Vedic culture started to decline. And because of this, people of the lower *varnas* also began to be envious of the higher *varnas*, and then disunity, disrespect, and friction slowly increased through the years amongst the castes.

The boy's father realized all this and explained that now, because of the stupid and sinful act of his son, all of society would begin to move in a behavior contrary to the spiritually progressive way of life.

In this way, through time, society began to deviate from the Vedic standards. The perverted nature of the modern caste system started to creep into the genuine Vedic system of *varnashrama*, even from the time of Jamadagni and Parashurama many hundreds of years ago. As the Brahmanas became more self-interested, a struggle began between them and the Kshatriyas. The Brahmanas made birth in a Brahmana's family as the qualification for being one. Thus, one's *varna* was determined by birth, which stifled people in the lower *varnas*. The *varna* system, which was absent from the Vedic literature, was included and explained only in the *Dharmasastras* and *smriti* literature, such as the *Manu-samhita*.

In this way, the *varnashrama* system degenerated in India, and all the classes gradually began to neglect their duties. Testing the abilities, tendencies, and talents of the children to determine their natural interests and character disappeared. Birth became the major factor in determining *varna* or caste. The Brahmanas in particular became self-centered and protective of their superiority, forgetting their duties and

losing their qualities. Sacrifice, religious study, and austerity gradually became absent in the traits of many of the Brahmanas. The people in the other *varnas* also lost their good characteristics. Chivalry, leadership, and forbearance were no longer to be found to such a high degree in the Kshatriya spirit. As leaders, they no longer kept the welfare of the people in focus. Vaishyas lost their charity and honesty in business and became greedy and avaricious. The laborer class, the Shudras, no longer wanted to be servants, but desired that others serve them. They wanted to have position and control, without knowing what is best to do with it, and not being qualified to guide or lead people properly, and, thus, misdirecting the world. In this way, society has become disheveled and out of balance and harmony, and does not follow in accord with Dharma.

Some of the Kshatriyas rebelled and formed or joined Buddhism, which did without all *varnas* or castes. The Vaishyas also used Jainism. Together, Buddhism and Jainism tried to bring the end of Brahmanism. The result was actually a deterioration of the Vedic culture in general.

As society in India started to decay after distancing itself from the true Vedic system, and because of disunity and friction, it weakened to the point wherein it allowed the low-born or *mleccha* kings from outside India to come in and conquer and control it. This brought even further decline to the Vedic culture. Later, it was during the British reign in which the modern caste system became more widely practiced and ingrained in Hinduism. By now the caste system was completely different and separate from the Vedic system of *Varnashrama*. The British encouraged the practice of casteism to increase the divisions between people, thus making it easier for the British to rule over them. A disunited society will hardly have the force, cooperation, or strength to defend itself from intruders. So the British fueled casteism and kept it more ingrained in society for their own interests. In this way, it was many years before the British could be removed. In fact, the British justified their presence with promises of helping keep the peace between the growing divisions in the Indian social structure. In any case, well after the British left, the divisions and the focus on ethnic classifications that had increased during their reign have remained.

So, the British used the untouchable classes as a means for their own political purpose, and an instrument in their divide and rule policy for dividing the Hindu majority. This amplified the divisions of the caste system and made them more solid in the people's identification with the castes. This had negative and regressive affects on the Indian society that have not gone away. However, in 1936, the Indian government made it even worse by outlining the Scheduled Castes among the untouchables

and labeled a list of such classifications. The various castes would be regarded with separate status for assembly and seats of parliament, along with special benefits for education and employment. This became adopted into the Indian Constitution which has made it a practice that has endured to date, with special laws making the labeling of untouchability an offense. The Untouchability Act of 1955 provides the list of penalties for any such offense. Now, there are numerous and separate divisions amongst the Scheduled Castes to the point where it will never cease to exist, at least in a general way, especially in the villages. The cities are becoming somewhat more homogenized due to necessity of occupational fulfillment and education as opposed to merely growing out of such traditions.

As far as "untouchablitiy" goes, it was never mentioned in any Vedic literature. This was never a part of the Vedic system, but merely a more modern invention. There is no justification for it. The earliest mention of it seems to be in the Chinese traveler Fa Hsien's account of his journey in the 4th century CE. It also seems that this became a name for those who were not amongst the basic four *varnas*, and were thus without a caste or *varna*. They were called Panchama in some regions, which merely means the fifth *varna*. Later, in 1933, Gandhi gave them the name of Harijan, or "people of God," which was accepted by many members of the Panchama class. The 1931 census used the term of "Scheduled Castes" as the proper name for identifying the Panchama class. In 1970, the term "Dalit" came to be used, which is a Marathi word based in Sanskrit which means "broken or ground down," usually meaning one who is oppressed. This term has slowly gained usage across India.

Though Indian society has always been progressive to varying degrees, this idea of assigning a *varna*, caste or class of activity to someone merely by one's birth parents has been the major failure of individual and social development in modern Hindu society.

THE DANGERS OF CASTEISM AS WE FIND IT TODAY

As casteism continues, it furthers the fragmentation of Indian society. In fact, you could say that it has practically killed Vedic society and has brought about the numerous divisions and social quarrels that we now find in India. Even amongst the Hindus alone, there has been fighting along caste, ethnic, and sectarian lines for hundreds of years. This is one of the main reasons why the country has been weakened to

such a degree that they could not properly defend themselves in a unified way from the genocide under the Muslim invasions, and now modern fundamentalism. This sort of fragmentation also forced Indians to endure two centuries of British persecutions.

Casteism today does not help society advance spiritually. In fact, it helps promote emphasis on bodily and social distinctions, contempt, and disapproval among the people of different classes and ethnic groups. For this reason, we still see today that when the Shudras and Dalits feel like they are disliked by fellow Hindus, they become Muslims, Christians, or Buddhists in the attempt to find greater acceptance and avoid class differences. The result of this has been social disharmony. Otherwise, there would have been no need for parts of India to be divided to create Bangladesh and Pakistan, which have since become nothing more than mortal enemies of India. Have any lessons been learned? Apparently not. Ethnic intolerance is on the rise in many parts of India.

Even today you can find such divisions that a Brahmana from one state does not trust a Brahmana from a different part of India. For example, the Nambudris of Kerala look down on any other Brahmanas. Even among other groups, a Jat boy from the Punjab will not marry a Jat girl from Uttar Pradesh. And a Patel from Kutch will look at a Patel from Ahmedabad as foreign. Thus, the problem of caste and ethnicity is making a society that fights like cats and dogs. In reality, casteism is killing Indian culture.

WHAT WE CAN DO TO ELIMINATE THE CASTE SYSTEM

Social revolutionaries who wanted to change the caste system have been around for a long time. Gandhi was a notable figure in this. However, before him was Ramanujacharya. He crusaded against the concept of untouchability. In Melkote, Karanataka, he threw open the doors to the temple and let everyone in, regardless of classification. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also ignored the restrictions that were established by the caste system. He associated and ate with anyone who was a sincere devotee of the Lord, considering one's intention and consciousness as being more important than the mere social classification of one's body. Are not these the examples we should follow?

So what can be done to change this form of casteism? We can go back to the Vedic system of studying the natural tendencies of the child in its early stage of education. Then observe the child's association,

activities, and intellectual interests to begin to determine his or her real *varna* or direction in occupation. Then, as in any western country, as the child grows, begin testing, counseling, and steering him or her in the proper course of education to determine if the right category has been given. Then allow that person to develop him or herself to the fullest possibility without restrictions of some forced caste placed on the person. It does not even have to be called *varnashrama*. But the process can merely direct a person according to his or her qualities and characteristics to find more fulfillment and potential in life, and, thus, more happiness. This is only the basics of what *varnashrama* was and is meant to do. Other things that can be done that can help do away with the modern form of casteism include the following:

1. ENFORCING THE EXISTING LAWS. There have been laws passed against the practice of untouchability and discrimination toward those considered to be of lower caste, some of which have already been enacted. India's Constitution has a specific Article forbidding untouchability (Article 17), along with Article 25(2b) to throw open Hindu religious institutions to all sections of Hindus, and Article 15 (4) to permit the state to make special provisions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. However, this has only made the caste system more ingrained in society, making it more difficult to fix or do away with. It also has a host of other Articles in Part III to ensure Right to Equality. After all, India is a democracy with freedom for anyone regardless of race, religion, or sex. And under a democracy, everyone should follow the same set of laws—a uniform code for all Indians regardless of class, ethnic group, or religion. However, these laws need to be monitored in a way to make sure that they are implemented to see to it that this caste prejudice is not only outlawed, but stopped. After all, India still receives much criticism for this from the global community.

Is this possible? Yes, it is. Nepal, on August 16, 2001, recently made the announcement that they would put such laws into practice against the discrimination of lower-caste Hindus and the centuries-old idea that certain people are untouchable, which would become punishable by a severe sentence. But more importantly, not only must laws be enforced, but spiritual awareness and development must be advanced so that people will naturally outgrow this perception of caste consciousness and class divisions.

2. FREEDOM TO ENTER ALL HINDU TEMPLES. All people, no matter whether they are Dalits, other low-caste Hindus, or people like Westerners who have converted to Hinduism, should have

the means and freedom which enable them to enter all Hindu temples and participate in the Vedic process of spiritual development. The restriction of allowing only certain people into the temples again is merely a practice that expands and protects the rights of those who are already privileged, without showing the concern for others. It is another example of how the upper-castes suppress those of lower status. It is another example of how it is causing the disintegration of the noble standards that were once found in the traditional Vedic culture.

The point is that if everyone can equally participate in the worship and traditions that you find in the Vedic temples, which is indeed possible in most temples in India, it helps preserve, protect, and promote Sanatana-dharma, the Vedic traditions. And everyone has a right to follow and participate. This is what must be upheld. Then people will not feel inclined to convert to another religion, and will remain within their own customs. Otherwise, if such things as restrictions to enter temples continue, it only helps provide a prescription for a slow extinction of the Vedic culture.

3. PROMOTE GENUINE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. Ultimately, as with all social problems, the most important action to take in order to change society is to provide the means for continued spiritual development. That is why it is important that spiritual organizations work to fulfill the above-mentioned points, and also provide the means for the upliftment of people's consciousness through spiritual education and practice, so that people can seriously change their view of their fellow human beings. That is why temples need to be open to everyone, and spiritual teachers and gurus should teach and take this spiritual message to everyone. We all need to realize our transcendental identities, and that we are all spiritual beings, not the temporary bodies in which we reside. As spiritual beings, we are all the same. On that level, there needs to be no special treatment of one over another. Materially, there may be so many differences, but these are all temporary and only within the material vision. By recognizing this, it can help us get back to practicing the real and genuine version of casteism, which is the Vedic system of *varnashrama*.

My own spiritual master put it bluntly, he said that if all you see is who is a Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra, then your vision is no better than that of a dog. A dog also recognizes distinctions, such who is its friend, enemy, or source of food. Our vision should be much higher than that if we are to consider ourselves human beings.

* * *

The above mentioned points, which are not many, may not completely cure this problem of caste suppression, but it could certainly take things in the right direction and begin to change how things in the social arrangement of India continue.

Many organizations have shown and teach disregard for the caste system and its materialistic designations. Spiritual organizations such as Iskcon, the Swami Narayana organization, the Swadhyaya group, the RSS, VHP, and others, have taken the path of showing the equality amongst all people without caste distinctions. They treat everyone equally while allowing individuals to pursue their own particular occupational tendencies without the stigma of being categorized into any certain social group. This is one way in which society can again be unified, especially in regard to Hindu society and India in general.

It is also of utmost importance to use every occasion to help change the social disparities into a common devotional unity. We can especially see such unity at spiritual festivals, like the Kumbha Mela of January, 2001. At this spiritual event, wherein 71 million people attended over a seven week period, everyone bathed in the rivers side by side, both rich and poor, educated and not, villagers and city dwellers alike. They all honored the sages and saints together, or sat in rows together doing *puja* or listening to the talks, or taking food given at the camps. Social sectarianism had no place in it. So Hindu unity is possible. Yet, we have to be ready to tear down the needless ethnic barriers and unnecessary classifications that get in the way.

We need to have more social gatherings that allow people to come together in a cooperative mood, then work or play together, and get to know each other better. We especially need to have more religious and spiritual functions, like Krishna Janmastami, Ramnavami, etc., that can bring everyone together to celebrate in a way in which we forget about our class distinctions or ethnic divisions. That way we can all be inspired and then leave the event while still holding that inspiration in our hearts. By experiencing such events and then carrying this attitude wherever we go, it will reinforce social harmony, equality, and fraternity amongst all.

When you are spiritually charged, you want to share that inspiration and love with everyone. You do not want anything to stifle your feeling of spiritual exhilaration. You want everyone else to feel it, too. That is when you are really approaching true spiritual and God consciousness. And casteism can never be a part of that. It will only separate you from your fellow spiritual beings, and take down your

spiritual consciousness and alienate you from God and from the God within everyone.

Another thing that can help in this matter is that swamis from various *maths* and temples should visit those who are neglected. They should put on religious functions in their communities. Or they can make sure that such people, along with everyone else, are invited to the temples for regular functions, and see to it that there is equality in matters of *puja*, worship, *prasad* and food distribution, and Vedic education and instructions. This is the common heritage of all Hindus, and, indeed, all of mankind. No one should be deprived from that, and it should be our duty to see to it that everyone has this opportunity. We must all do our part. Otherwise, if there are any who are not spiritually educated, then we are the ones to blame. We are the ones who have not done our work.

Ironing out these man-made difficulties by spreading spiritual education is, in effect, a way of invoking and showing our devotion to God. If God established *varnashrama*, as explained in the *Bhagavad-gita*, then we should work in ways to tear down the modern and materialistic caste system and reinstall the genuine Vedic process of the four main orders of society and the justifiable way to determine who fits into which order. In this Vedic system, everyone is recognized as being spiritually equal, and everyone can work according to their occupational tendencies toward pleasing God without being subject to rigid social classifications and stigmas.

It is my personal vision of a casteless society, a society that focuses on unity through our spiritual identities, which are all equal and beyond bodily designations. It is my personal vision wherein everyone can work according to their own natural tendencies in a spirit of devotion to God without being categorized merely because of their birth. Like so many others, it is my vision of a society in which everyone can get along, cooperating and assisting each other in harmony toward our spiritual growth. However, we all have to work toward social reform. After all, what kind of world do you want to live in? What kind of world do you prefer? A world divided, full of social disparities and ethnic divisions? Or a world united in cooperation and harmony, all working to encourage and help each other through life? The decision is obvious.

We should all be ambassadors to spread social harmony. We should all be ambassadors of the genuine Vedic standards and culture. We should all be revolutionaries to break the materialistic social barriers between us. We must be willing to work for the progress and upliftment of all, which then guarantees our own upliftment. We must be willing to

change society, and that change starts within each and every one of us, and the way we view one another.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Condescending Attitudes of India's Elite

Amazingly enough, some of the most callous people toward India's Vedic culture and traditions are those of India's elite or upper classes. Here we are talking about the wealthy, not the Brahmana class. Many of these people pride themselves in being Communists, Socialists, or Secularists, in which they display their views by being against anything Hindu or Vedic. They may even be Hindu intellectuals and feel that to display their "modern" opinion of things, they hold doubt about their own culture and an unwillingness to defend it against the demeaning disposition often found in secularist media. These days it often appears that to be secular means to be anti-Hindu.

Communism itself has never worked, which is why key countries like Russia and China, even Korea, which were once major Communist strongholds, have now drifted far away from the Communist agenda that they once had. Yet, they still think it will work in India? It is often a matter that people think they can find solutions outside the realm of India's culture, so they give up the heritage altogether and watch as things only get worse.

Communists are in some ways more dangerous than the monotheistic religions that are still trying to convert all of the Indians. They are more dangerous at changing the country and its philosophical landscape since most of them are what you could call followers of Macaulley. He wanted all Indians to become British by taste. And this has continued with the Communists who have become anti-India, and even more anti-Hindu in every view. Thus, the influence of the Communists in India spreads an attitude against Hindus and other religions in a way that makes people feel that their problems are because of religion, especially Hinduism, which must be destroyed in order to make social progress.

Much of this is an effect from the British use of secularism to develop a class of Indians who they could trust, and who would become

British by taste rather than sympathetic to Hindu Indians. Thus, they gave such Indians special treatment and education, and jobs that appeared to be sophisticated, but were really just the scraps of the British labor pool. In this way, a growing number of Indian citizens were trained to become ashamed of their own culture, embarrassed by their own countrymen, and, thus, convenient tools of the British. And now the present secularists also assist in the "Hindu-bashing" that can often be seen in India's modern media. And these are journalists, lawyers, politicians, bureaucrats, the elite of India.

Many of these people may exhibit a complete ignorance of the significance and purpose of temples, rituals, the deities in the sanctums, and so on, though they will be quick to show a demeaning critique of such things. They may express the idea that these items are like useless museums that hold no tangible value for the people. So it is better to dismantle them and build a golf course in its place, as if that is going to improve anything. Yet many of them do not realize that this attitude is but a leftover of the colonial regimes. In other words, such an attitude is not from a truly open-minded disposition of a genuinely learned person, but an ingrained bias from the old slave mentality toward whoever were the ruling oppressors of the time. And many of these people are Hindus, or at least call themselves that. Yet in their claim to be modern, they betray their culture, religion, their fellow Hindus, even their own nation. Thus, they adopt the Western view of their own country, and more than willingly, knowingly or unknowingly, work in compliance with those who really wish the worst for India, those who would like to see the end of Vedic culture and see India as broken and fragmented, with another piece chipped away until there is finally nothing left. At that time, rather than having India as a nation with a Hindu majority, the Vedic culture would be practiced only in small enclaves at whatever is left of the various holy places scattered throughout the country.

This is all extremely harmful, especially in the way such people also try to neglect or de-emphasize Indian history and the many challenges and hardships, as well as torture and cruelty that the heroes of the country underwent to preserve or protect India's unique culture. They went through the most trying of situations in hopes that the great traditions of India would be saved for the future generations, yet we can seen that many of the younger generations have lost their appreciation for their own culture. They do not see the value in it because they do not look at it or study it properly.

This reminds me of a story in which a young but wealthy Indian girl from New Delhi was looking for a good yoga teacher. She had

started a serious practice of yoga and was saving her money so she could find the best yoga teacher. She was convinced that she could accomplish this if she could just get to California. Yet, she was living in the homeland of yoga where there are so many of the best yoga teachers. And didn't she know that so many Westerners were also saving their money so they could go to India to find the best yoga teacher? So here is an example of how Indians epitomize anything from the West at the expanse of what great things their own country has to offer. Instead of looking to the West for everything, they could easily find much of what they are looking for right in their own country.

Anyway, the intellectuals and Communist historians have also said such asinine things as how the Turks did social welfare in destroying the sacred images and temples to teach people how to live without them, since there was no use in them anyway. They have also made other statements, such as how the Turk invaders only helped the Hindu masses rise up against the ancient oppressors in society and enable them to overcome the traditions and misguided beliefs that kept them downtrodden. Thus, the elitist secularists promote the crude and unjustified wrong ideas about the Vedic tradition and of India's history. This is the danger of these pampered elitists and their so-called secular ideas.

Sanatana-Dharma, India's path of reaching the many views of ultimate reality, was viewed by the British as meaningless paganism. Though they exhibited some tolerance and freedom of its practice, they, nonetheless, preferred that it was destroyed. How to do this was planned not be revolution, but by education. This was one of the main aspects of British control, which was the development of the British system of education and the use of the English language for teaching. Gradually, only with British diplomas could a person get a good job. The traditional centers of learning and in preserving the Vedic traditions were bypassed or ignored. Even today we can easily see that many are those Indians who will gladly give up their own culture if it means they can get high paying jobs. Furthermore, some of the major corporations in India are known to prefer the hiring of Christians over Hindus or others. So if one wants a good salary at such companies, there may be a need or at least some pressure to convert away from one's tradition.

The British tried in many ways to lead people away from Vedic culture but never succeeded. The Dharma continued to reside in its many villages and in the hearts of it sages and followers. It was only the village Brahmanas who kept the knowledge of Vedanta and Sanskrit alive. However, the British still created a class of "secularists" who were

among India's elite to try to downplay it and turn people away from Vedanta.

The Hindu-hating Congress party, as it became known as, is another example of this wrong direction of intent and disposition. Naturally, they want to be perceived as lovers of India and its people, but its very foundation when it was formed in December of 1885 shows otherwise. With the aim to "Allow all those who work for the national good to meet each other personally, to discuss and decide of the political operations to start during the year", and with Englishman A. O. Hume laying its foundation to work for the British interests, shows its true purpose at the time. The pre-independence leaders of this party were but Indians who had been Western educated, anglicized, with the British Labor form of socialism as their ideal. Thus, they were really meant to operate as the go-between layer of bureaucracy for the British to the Indian masses. In this way, they were a Westernized elite, separate from the Indian culture.

Therefore, the British favored the Congress party as a means to continue its occupation of India. And because the Congress "moderates" had a mindset that worked along the same lines as their British masters, they became even greater Hindu haters than the British, the attitude of which has filtered down through its generations until today. This operation continued through the 19th century, but then changed in order to acquire some laws from the British that were favorable to India as the Congress began to realize how it had been played foolishly into submission for the British cause. Nonetheless, the general "moderate" attitude and distancing from the Vedic roots of India in the Congress Party has continued to this day.

One of the things that the elitists and Hindu-hating historians have done, whether moderates, Communists, or secularists, is to change the view of history, even to the point of covering up the Muslim atrocities that have taken place. This may go so far as to try to explain away the period of medieval India under Muslim domination as a period of peace and friendship between Muslims and Hindus. Furthermore, it has been said that Muslim rulers, such as the fanatical Aurangzeb, was kind and considerate to Hindus, even if it meant he had to show special favors to them at times. The idea behind this propaganda is to imply that it is the Hindu "communalists" who want to saffronize India, and who are creating the discord between Hindus and Muslims. In reality, the promotion of this idea had previously been started by the British. These new moderates are only continuing it.

An example along these lines can be found in a statement by the "radical humanist" M. N. Roy, in which he said: "Islam has fulfilled a historic mission of equality and abolition of discrimination in India, and that for this, Islam has been welcomed in India by the lower castes." He goes on to state that: "If at all any violence occurred, it was a matter of justified class struggle by the progressive forces against the reactionary forces, meaning the feudal Hindu upper classes." Nothing could be further from the truth in this distorted view of Indian history, as we have already recollected in our segment on India's battles to save its culture.

Another surprising example of the downplaying of Muslim atrocities is Jawaharlal Nehru's remembrance of Mahmoud Ghazni, the cruel ruler who took pleasure in destroying thousands of temples and slaughtering thousands more Hindus. Nehru said: "Buildings interested Mahmoud and he was much impressed by the city of Mathura, where there are today a thousand edifices as firm as the faith of the faithful. Mahmoud was not a religious man. He was a Mohamedan, but that was just by the way. He was in the first place a soldier and a brilliant soldier."

Say what??!! That was all he was? If Mahmoud was so intrigued by Mathura, then why was the city attacked and destroyed by Mahmoud? And if all he was was a soldier, are we supposed to accept that as the reason why he slaughtered so many Hindus and desecrated and destroyed so many Hindu temples? And this is coming from Jawaharlal Nehru, who we assume had a much clearer understanding of history than his statement shows. But what it really exhibits again is the downplaying of the Muslim atrocities in Indian history, a distortion of the facts. Furthermore, it is noted that Mahmoud read from the Koran every night after performing the "pious" acts of destroying temples and killing Hindus. No, Mahmoud was more than a soldier, he was a dedicated Muslim with no tolerance for any other religion. That is the real history. He showed his dedication to Islam by destroying anything non-Muslim, including temples and the lives of thousands of Hindus. And that is what we must not forget, regardless of how the elitists in India try to mislead us.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Cultural Preservation in India's Northeast

India's northeast is an area that I had never visited before. So my experience of touring Arunachal Pradesh (in December of 2002) and lecturing about the glories of Vedic culture and the value of the indigenous traditions to the people there was not only inspiring, but was also a terrific adventure. Fortunately, I was able to see not only some of its large towns but also some of its smallest villages.

I have been a member of Iskcon, the Hare Krishna Movement, and a disciple of Srila Prabhupada since 1975. However, I also have a broad vision of cooperation, and, thus, work with a wide number of people and other groups in the global Vedic community. Therefore, it is my intent to work with the extended Hindu society for a common cause. This shows the power that comes from an expansive and cooperative effort, as well as the usefulness that we can be to the larger community.

It is for this reason that I had originally been invited by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati from Coimbatore, along with several other delegates from the West, to go to Guwahati in Assam to participate in the "North East India Janajati Faith & Culture Protection Forum." This conference took place on the 14th and 15th of December, 2002. It focused on the increasing threat in India's northeast regions of the loss of its culture and traditions because of the number of conversions to Christianity that are taking place, often by questionable tactics. I and the other delegates were there to give lectures and presentations on the benefits of the local and Vedic culture of the region. A few of the other delegates at the time included David Frawley, Andrew Foss, and Vrindavana Parker, all members of The Vedic Friends Association.

The point is that when they see Westerners talking about the glories of Vedic culture, the Indians take it more seriously. It adds credence to the presentation. This was not the first time that I had toured India to give lectures, and I have found that this is true. They look at a typical westerner, such as myself, who has been brought up in a country

like America, the most materially affluent country in the world, and often grown up in the usual Christian background, who then comes to India and explains how much we have been influenced by the Vedic tradition and knowledge. This is a real novelty to some of them. This is very unusual that we should speak with such approval of what the Vedic culture has had to offer humanity. This is because we may have first viewed India from an outsider's point of view, but have now become educated and experienced enough that our viewpoint is from an Indian's perspective. And it gives them a sense of pride in what they have.

Furthermore, as David Frawley told me, the Prime Minister of India at the time, Vajpayai, had personally told him that as Westerners, we can say more than Indians can. If an Indian gets up and speaks, or even if a Swami speaks about the glories of Vedic culture, it is to be expected. It's nothing new. But if a westerner does it, then that is different, and we can say things that the locals cannot always say and be taken seriously. In fact, all of us Western delegates got coverage in the press over the next few days for being there and giving talks at the conference. So in light of this, I felt good that I could come and do my part in encouraging people regarding the value of their own culture.

This conference was the first of its kind, and there were almost 300 delegates from the northeast. Many were there to speak and give their concerns with what is happening, and there was hardly enough time for everyone. However, many papers were also presented, and it certainly provided the means for planning for an even more effective conference the following year. The point is, it brought out the concerns people had regarding the future existence of the area's culture and the threats that the people their face in trying to preserve it.

WHY BOTHER WITH THE NORTHEAST?

Why concern ourselves with the Northeast area of India? Because there are those who have been working for years to make it secede from India and make it into a separate Christian country. This includes Assam, Arunachala Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Yet, it is a big part of the Vedic culture and tradition of India. For example, when we look back at the history of the region we find that Lord Krishna's friend Arjuna had married a Naga wife, Ulupi, in Nagaland. Arjuna's brother Bhima also married a Bachari tribal girl from the area of Nagaland. The city of Dimapur has the ruins of the Bachari tribe known as Bhima's palace. In fact, Dimapur is one of the

oldest cities in the northeast, being 2,000 or 3,000 years old, if not older, and was once known as Hidimbipur after the name of Bhima's wife, Hidimbi. She was a member of the Dimasa Bachari tribe. Their son was Ghatotkacha.

Furthermore, Krishna married Rukmini in Arunachal Pradesh. The area of Agninagar is where the story of Usha and Anirudha took place, as related in the *Bhagavata Purana* and other Vedic books. Anirudha was the grandson of Krishna and the son of Pradyumna. It is where the huge battle happened between Anirudha and the army of Usha's father. Landmarks in the area can be seen of this episode of Vedic history. This is also described in the *Bhagavata Purana*. So there is much of India's ancient tradition that connects the area. So to help keep it as a part of India and preserve it's tradition is important, rather than letting it become another chip taken away from the country, like the militants have tried to do with Kashmir on the other side of northern India. So this was our purpose for going into the area. To do this, members of the Vedic Friends Association works with other organizations in the area that share the same concern.

TRAVELING IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

After the conference, most of us western delegates went our separate ways into the interior of the region, such as Nagaland, Meghalaya, or Arunachal Pradesh. My own route took me to the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh, closer to China and Myanmar. You need special permits to travel into these parts, but the organization I was working with, the Vivekananda Kendra, provided the means for such permits to be granted. So I spent another seven days traveling to many towns and villages, giving from one to three lectures everyday, except on the days that were full of traveling.

I was also able to see much of the area's wilderness. There are extremely lush forests, beautiful hills and valleys, and lovely flowing rivers. The most prominent river of course is the Brahmaputra. It also has many tributaries that reach much farther into the hills and mountains. The best time to travel is in the winter, which is the dry season there. Once the rainy season starts in March, the Brahmaputra rises much higher and can be up to ten miles wide in some places. Then it must be crossed by ferry, which can take several hours in parts. As it was, in the eastern region, we could sometimes drive right through the shallow portions of the rivers. At areas where we could not see exactly where the

road went, we would throw rocks into the shallow parts of the river. If you could hear the rocks bounce off the bottom, that's where we would drive the jeep. However, there was a time when we miscalculated and we drove into the river and the water started coming up over the front of the jeep. So before we got soaked, the driver stepped on the gas and we simply went through it to the other side without a problem. At other areas, we would have to take the pontoon bridges. However, in the rainy season even these could be washed away.

While traveling in these hilly areas, some of the roads were the worst I had ever ridden in India. In other places you could not tell where the road ended and another started. They were like mere paths in the sand. And while driving up to the town of Khonsa during the night after a day of rain, the roads were so bad that without a four-wheel drive jeep there would have been no way we could have gotten through the mud, which was easily six inches deep or more along steep hillsides. I have been on narrow mountain roads of the Himalayas before while going up to Badrinatha or Gangotri, so I know what they can be like. But when the tires start spinning and the jeep begins sliding around in the mud and getting close to the edge of the road, then it gets a little hair-raising. Long drop offs down from the edge of the road were not unusual.

To reach these towns, I traveled in a jeep accompanied by a driver, along with two members of the Vivekananda Kendra, Rupesh and Ramana, and my own personal security officer for extra safety. This was not because the people are unfriendly, but because of the danger the region has suffered due to the effects of militant Christian insurgents coming from Nagaland. They come in and terrorize the people and force them with threats to pay high taxes to fund their cause (a diplomatic term for robbery), or with death if they do not convert to their religion. This is called "gunpoint conversions." They have even taken people out to the forests to shoot and kill them when they have refused to convert. Furthermore, when we were traveling from Mergherita to Khonsa we had a truck with additional armed soldiers follow us into the jungle region for extra protection. You never know when the insurgents could show up in the middle of a forest, set up road blocks, and rob you or threaten your life. Though I never felt in peril, you never knew if something might happen. So while traveling and speaking on the benefits and glories of Vedic culture, this was one of the dangers with which we had to contend.

An example is the town of Khonsa. This is a pleasant hillside town with neighboring villages. Yet, some years ago the town and its shops would often stay open with activity until eight o'clock or later. But after the Christian insurgents started coming and making their demands,

the town now closes up shortly after dark, which is around five PM or later. The people became fearful of what could happen. Even though the police and military have increased its numbers to add protection, the people have become extra cautious, and there are certain things that they can no longer do. This is one way in which their freedom to practice their culture is being threatened. The original traditions of this region are parts of the great river of Sanatana-dharma that flows throughout India, or are all tributaries of that great river. Naturally, we are respectful toward all religions. But it should not be at the expense of one's own culture and way of life. We must not humble ourselves out of our own existence, or our own values and traditions. We must know when to stand and take counter measures for preserving our own heritage. This is why attention needs to be given to the Northeast region so that the simple and innocent people of this area can be protected from falling as victims of destabilizing forces.

THE PEOPLE IN ARUNACHAL

The people in the region are wonderful, for the most part, extremely hospitable and courteous. They are simple, humble, shy, and incredibly conscientious of others' feelings and well-being. They maintain ecological lifestyles and acquire whatever they need by living off the land. I met many people there who always invited me to their homes for dinner or lunch to try their local vegetarian foods. And they were always giving me gifts that represented their local crafts and traditions. I also met other Indians who were from other parts of the country that, upon arriving in Arunachal Pradesh, simply loved the people so much that they have stayed there.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the ecologically built houses are made mostly from bamboo and do not even have doors or locks on them. People can come and go as they like with no fear from thieves or dacoits from within their own village. Because of their values, these villages have no beggars, no orphans, or destitutes. Everyone takes care of everyone else. For example, when a young, newly married couple wants to build a house, the whole community works together to build it in what's called "community house building." Also, if any house gets burned down, the whole village comes together to rebuild it. I was personally shown a part of a village where several houses had burnt down. The houses were all rebuilt in two days because everyone worked together, using local materials. Then others come to offer the people in

need such items as blankets, utensils, or other necessities. In this way, within 24 hours or so a well-furnished house can be ready for a family. When a whole village is burnt, other neighboring villages come together to rebuild and furnish the houses. Thus, the society responds to the needs of its members. Therefore, it does not need an orphanage or a destitute home, nor a police force, or government forms of welfare. The society itself is a welfare society by its own self-sufficiency. Many people that I know would look at this as an ideal society. And yet the Western or converted missionaries want to "civilize" these people by making them change their ways and religion. Then wherever conversions take place, these traditional values and community cooperation are lost.

THE DANGERS IN THE NORTHEAST

In personally interviewing the local people about the situation, this is what I learned: The northeast region has become so infected by Christian militants and conversions that they want to secede from the rest of India and become their own Christian country, against the wishes of those who want to remain a part of the Vedic or indigenous cultures and India.

Assam, for example, has an economy based on agriculture and oil. Assam produces a significant part of the total tea production of the world, and (at the time of this writing) produced more than half of India's petroleum. Assam has 30 major tribes of people, while the nearby state of Arunachal Pradesh has 24 major tribes. However, the current political situation in Assam is unstable with the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) fighting a low-intensity but widespread guerrilla warfare for independence from India. Although the Indian military has tried to quell the insurgents with a large presence for more than ten years, they have not been very successful. Plus, there are other militant groups that are seeking independence or autonomy in Assam.

Mizoram is another state that is now mostly converted to Christianity, but whose people have shunned the path of violence and are peace loving. They are, nonetheless, reviving their age old culture, traditions, and festivals after feeling the dread impact of westernization which invaded their land with the alien religion.

Manipur, south of Nagaland and north of Mizoram, still remains attached to its old Vedic culture, especially through its song and dances, many of which tell the stories of Lord Krishna. However, many changes have also been felt here as well.

Christians entered Nagaland and Mizoram in 1860-70, and Arunachal in 1952. Because of the influence of Western evangelists, the local traditions are now in the process of being transformed beyond recognition or wiped out entirely. Taking advantage of the poverty, lack of employment and education, these foreign missionaries have lured away a large part of the people from their traditional moorings. Types of local food, drink, dress, songs, dances, and festivals are all being lost or forgotten because of recently being regarded as unrighteous, but are being replaced by modern Western pop songs and dances. So where is the improvement?

However, the people have not completely snapped the bond with the culture of their forefathers. Conversion tears the individual away from his or her family, and from the rest of the community. Acts of conversion, therefore, create social unrest and produces clashes in an area that has until recently been a place of community peace and cooperation. What is now appearing is the typical form of competition found in Western society, and a class struggle emerging in the once classless society. In this way, we can understand that the work of religious conversion in the guise of social service by calling the indigenous cultures and the forefathers as satanic or worshipers of Satan, or people of darkness and damned to hell, is a form of violence of the worst sort. It is but another crime against India. It is, therefore, all the more necessary to think of ways and means to stem the tide of this so-called modernism which is producing the loss of the Vedic and indigenous cultures in the area.

One of the methods of the missionary schools to make Christian converts is that they offer free education to the local children. They educate them freely for one or two years and then begin charging them for books and clothes. However, if the parents cannot pay the costs, the schools tell them that if they make four or five boys into Christians, then they do not have to pay the school tuition. Thus, the education narrows their views of their own culture to the point where they willingly give it up and help perpetuate that limited perspective of the foreign religion.

The people are also told that they are not Indian, and should not think they need to be loyal to India or the Indian traditions. They are told by the schools and anthropologists that they are actually “austro-mongoloid” to inspire a feeling that the people do not belong here since they do not look like other Indians. Or since there is a difference in food habits, as some people eat beef in Arunachal Pradesh, they should not identify with other Indians. The missionary schools then focus on

differences, and people become influenced because they do not have a deeper understanding of the Vedic unifying principles.

The idea is given to them that unless the people become Christian, they will not become qualified to develop themselves like America has done, where everyone is a Christian. They are told that becoming Christian is the way to become more materially successful. Thus, they are very surprised when an American like me comes along to explain that this is not true, and that many Westerners are actually looking toward Indian culture to further their own spiritual education and progress. And that many Indians come to America and rather than converting, they maintain their own traditions and build huge temples. Then they begin to think differently about what they are doing.

Another method is that when the Church comes in, the missionaries say that the people and their ancestors have been practicing evil. Sometimes they are even told that they and their customs are Satanic. Thus, all traditions, worship, festivals, etc., must stop since it is equal to devil worship. However, when people listen and adopt the ways of Christianity, the harmonious community living ends and the people become divided. The new Christians no longer participate in community activities, such as festivals, town meetings, or in respecting the land when a section is cleared for farming for a few years and later replanted with trees for future balance. Nor do they help with community house-building. All this stops among the Christian converts.

For example, in the villages people are so united that, as previously explained, when a house burns down, everyone helps to build a new house for the people who had been living there. Some people will also give utensils, others give blankets, and like that the people whose house burned down will have a new place and everything they need to go on as normal in only a few days. But when this cooperation ends because some of the townspeople have become Christian, people become selfish and alienated from age-old traditions and from each other, and no longer assist each other in such a communal way.

A simple example of this is the regional custom of making rice beer. The Christian missionaries have come in and told people they must give up their traditions because they are evil, including the making of rice beer, which anyone can do. It is not an industry. Rice beer is made from rice and liquid after being kept inside a bamboo stalk, and is actually a nutritious drink. Yet, it must stay contained and ferment for a long period of time before it becomes a strong brew. And you have to drink a lot of it if you expect to become inebriated. Otherwise, it is like a fruit drink with very little strength. So, with the incentive of the foreign

missionaries they give up making the rice beer and instead they are encouraged to simply buy wine. Now there have become so many wine and liquor shops in some areas like Assam that alcoholism has become a real concern. And there are far more health problems with liquor. So, in the name of progress, the situation has become more deteriorated and detrimental to the people than helpful or improved.

The missionaries, as part of their campaign for conversion, have also called the gods and goddesses of the communities "spirits." The people are told, "You do not have God, you only worship spirits. What you have is only primitive ideas of religion and a bundle of superstitions. If you want to be saved, you must follow our One True God." Thus, they take away the people's confidence in their culture, and by using the word "spirit" they also philosophically separate the local Vanavasi people (original indigenous people) from their Hindu or Vedic connection which does indeed have God as the center.

Other techniques that have been used include having painted images of Jesus and one of the local Vedic gods, such as Ganesh, or another. Since they are painted the same, they both look as if they are made from the same substance. Then while near a pond, the priests, to show which one is superior, will ask for the people to pray to the image and then slip it into the water. But because it is metal, it sinks. Then while they pray to Jesus, the priests put the image of Jesus in the water, but because it is wood, it floats, showing that it is superior, and that people should pray to Jesus. Or while a community is on a bus trip, the bus will stall along the road. The priest on the bus will ask the people to pray to their local god to help get the bus running again. They try to start the bus and nothing happens. Then he asks the people to pray to Jesus, and the driver will pull a switch which allows the bus to start again, and then everyone feels that praying to Jesus is better for them to get their wishes fulfilled. So then they will want to become Christians. Many other similar tricks could be explained that are used in this way. Other times, the church simply attracts the poor by giving them material goods that are needed. They may be offered free blankets, clothes, food, medical, etc., if they become Christian. Then they will come to church to get more of such goods and convert, but such conversions are often not that deep. If they are supplied the same things from another institution, they will convert in that direction. Thus, there is often a struggle going on between Catholics and other denominations for converts. Anyway, while traveling in the Northeast, there were so many things like this I saw, and more of such stories I heard from those who had experienced them.

A few other things that the church uses as techniques for conversion are explained by Naga Rani Gaidinliu. In 1978, the people of Lungkao village in Manipur had been approaching the state government for establishing a medical dispensary. As it could not happen for a long time, the men from the Christian church began visiting the people and would tell them that God could fulfill their desire for a dispensary only if they all stopped pursuing their age-old indigenous faiths and accepted Jesus Christ exclusively as their personal savior. They began to repeatedly tell the simple and innocent villagers that as long as they were on the side of "Satan" (meaning the indigenous faith) they would not have their desired dispensary but worse, they would also be burnt in hell fire before long. They were about to begin succeeding in this process when the State Government of Manipur gave approval to allow for the medical dispensary without assistance from the Christians and saved the situation.

Failing to convert adult Hindus, the economically powerful American Baptist Church, which had been working in the town of Kiriba, as well as the Roman Catholic Church elsewhere, entice the minor children to join their school. Thereafter, they work to convert them by baptizing them without the knowledge of the parents. As soon as a tribal child is converted, his or her indigenous name is changed in the school register the next day to something like that of John, Joseph, Mary or Margaret. Such conversions of minor children invariably lead to disharmony, unhappiness, and eventual shattering of the families, along with their age-old traditions and culture. This could be compared more closely to psychological warfare against the people and communities in which such churches have been allowed to exist, rather than social service, welfare, and upliftment.

Many times the church has not made any attempt to hide what they are doing. Actually, they have to include the number of converts they are making because that helps them appear successful and increases the funding they receive from the West. Thus, local people have been hearing and reading in the Christian propaganda that third world countries like India are the prime missionary fields. They declare their intention through radios, literature, or in church services, of turning India into a land of Christ by hook or crook.

The northeast region of India, especially around and in Nagaland, has 40 different missionary groups, all quarreling and competing for converts to Christianity. But it also has 18 major Christian militant groups, which are extremely dangerous. The Nagaland militants get church money and then buy guns, such as AK47s and AK57s from

Burma or Bangladesh. They will also go into villages and threaten people that they must pay a tax to them. Then they use the money to buy guns and weapons. The Indian Army is helping to stop such activities, but the secular press writes against the Army activities, making them appear to be villains working against the freedom of the people.

One of the tactics of these Christian militant groups is to travel throughout the area and kidnap people for ransom money. They patrol Arunachal towns to make them Christian. They tell the people that their lives are in danger if they do not build a church or pay a tax to them. These groups may also say that they are servants of the government, and, thus, collect a tax which they use for their own purpose. Of course, some people may say that these are not real Christians, so we should not take them seriously. Yet, if that is the case, then why don't you try telling them that and see what happens? They may not be convinced of your point of view and may end up turning their guns toward you. "Nagaland for Christ" is one of the names they use, which is stamped on the notes that demand tax. Therefore, they are completely convinced that they are Christians and are doing the right thing for their religion.

What the militants do is that groups of 20 to 30 men will come from places like Nagaland and then travel through the forest into towns of Arunachal Pradesh. They take food and rest, and then demand that the people should become Christian and threaten them with guns. Due to fear, people then convert in "gunpoint conversions." There are both Catholic and Baptist militant groups. Though these groups are all Christian, they still have no respect for each other and often fight amongst themselves. One such group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland has two factions. One is the Kaplan group, and the other is the Isak Muria group. On December 14 of 2002, the Kaplan group attacked the latter group when they were at church during a Sunday gathering. Four people were killed and others injured. So we have to ask ourselves; how can social harmony come from such disharmony? How can unity come from such disunity? So how can we combat this chaos and clean up this dilemma?

Also, while I was in the Northeast region, an incident took place in Tripura that represented the trouble that continues in the region, as noted in the Hindustan Times on December 31, 2002. It explained that Tribal Hindu villagers in Tripura pledged to fight alleged extortion demands by a Christian separatist group. Militants of the outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) have served extortion notices to hundreds of Hindu tribals and threatened them with death if they do not pay up.

"The demand notes were served only to tribal Hindu villagers with warnings of capital punishment to those who violated their diktat," Aswathama Jamatia, head priest of the Jamatia Hoda, an influential tribal Hindu group, told AFP (Agence France-Presse) by telephone.

Police confirmed the extortion demands by the NLFT, which is a predominantly Christian group fighting for an independent tribal homeland. Community leaders say the NLFT has demanded three per cent of the annual earnings of all government employees as tax, besides charging anything between Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 from farmers and businessmen, which many people would not be able to afford.

Villagers in remote areas have formed vigilante groups to foil the NLFT's drive. "People armed with sticks and other crude weapons, including bows and arrows, patrol vulnerable villages to scare away militants who come for extorting money," Rampada Jamatia said. "At no cost are we going to pay the militants."

Tribal Hindus account for about 22 per cent of Tripura's 3.2 million people. Christians are just about eight per cent of the state's population. Tribal Hindus also accuse the NLFT of converting people to Christianity at gunpoint. Insurgency in the state took root after a massive influx of Bengali-speaking refugees when East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, was created during India's partition in 1947.

The indigenous tribal people, who accounted for 95 per cent of the Tripura population in the 1931 census, are now just 30 per cent. More than 10,000 people have lost their lives to insurgency in Tripura during the previous two decades.

(From: http://www.hindustantimes.com/news/181_129174,0009.htm)

WORKING TO RESTORE CULTURAL BALANCE

To summarize the situation in the words of Talom Rukbo, the Father of the Donyipolo Movement in Arunachal Pradesh, from a talk he gave called "The Truth Every Bharatiya Should Know":

"The church--Christian missionaries--quickly capitalized on the innocence of our forefathers. They fraudulently convinced our people that we were barbarians and converted some into Christianity. Having put into them the fear of God, the temptation of Paradise, they put the Bible into their hands and employed the local youth to translate it and hymns in their local dialect. The books were made for free distribution in the local areas. Those brainwashed youths became their tools and handmade for propagation of their religion and erected churches to

attract the innocent Arunachalee people, thus converting them into missionaries. The so called 'Service' they offered--medicines and school--were thin disguises for their crooked purpose of conversion. They declared that the converted persons must discard (1) the 'animist' practices, (2) our festivals and that our Gods and Godesses were Saitan (evil spirits--Satan). Christians must depend only on the CROSS for their safety and security. Slowly this created frequent disturbances and social disharmony. The Christian missionaries were stooping to the lowest, most uncivilized means to tear social fabric of our society apart.

"Our traditions, customs, rituals, faith, festivals, dress, etc., have deep roots and profound meaning. We should remember that our forefathers have lived it with peace and happiness. We should take supreme pride in them, preserve them and guard them from the attack of any force--whichever it might be. Yes, it may have to be modified as per the social needs but without destroying its essentials. Seeing and worshiping the sun, moon, trees, earth... all these natural things, are reflections of our culture. We are seeing in them the expressions of ultimate divinity! Being the inheritors of such a lofty philosophy, why should we feel inferior to anyone or accept foreign faith? Raise your heads and proclaim that we are proud Arunachalees!!! Let us stop using the word tribal, henceforth as a cancerous legacy from the 'colonialists'. It was in keeping with their 'divide and rule policy'. Never be under the impression that modernization means westernization, it is not. Let us not imitate but adapt and accept whatever is constructive and in tune with our moral aptitude. Let this be our yardstick."

To help in this way, the Vivekananda Kendra has been establishing schools since 1977 with 60-70% support from the local people. Now they do not convert to Western religions so easily anymore in those areas. The quality of work of the Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalayas (VHVs) can be judged by the fact that starting in 1977 with only 7 schools, 23 teachers and 220 students, the VKVs have grown (in 2003) to 20 schools, 267 teachers and 6278 students in 25 years. Three more schools are scheduled to start in 2003, and the Kendra is still not able to meet the demand for more schools.

Graduates are becoming doctors, engineers, lawyers, administrators, but are also taking active roles and important positions in local government to work for the preservation of the cultures. Many also come back to Arunachal to work toward the development of the state and its people. The education provided in the VKVs is based on the principle of "Man Making and Nation Building," which encompasses a full curriculum of subjects and activities for mental, intellectual, physical,

and spiritual development. This is a plan that could work anywhere in India and should be strongly supported.

Vivekananda Kendra also started the Vivekananda Kendra Aruna Jyoti in 1993, a multi-dimensional service project for everyone. It includes five separate wings for education, health care, youth, women, and culture.

The goal is the development of the local culture through the arts and crafts for economic progress, and freedom from the schemes of the Church to bribe people with money to become Christian. Also, the Northeast regions have lush forests with many medicinal and Ayurvedic plants that are useful on the international markets. So these are also being harvested and marketed by local people. The people in these areas are also naturally very creative, so the emphasis is on getting the local economy more organized through sustainable development with local culture and traditions, along with crafts of bamboo and cane work, woodcarving, textiles, and other handmade crafts. By encouraging everyone to have strong roots in their own way of life and traditions, their culture can be protected in time.

Arun Jyoti is the organization that promotes culture in education and personality development and nation-building work in Arunachal. In the area of the Itanagar belt of Arunachal Pradesh, 172 study centers have been established, while in the eastern area there are not as many.

The Changalang district of Arunachal Pradesh is primarily Buddhist, but as we travel south it becomes mostly Christian. At least 60% of the people, however, support the Vivekananda Kendra because they now want to continue their own traditions. To further cultural awareness, the Vivekananda Kendra has one or two large seminars in the tribal areas each year, along with smaller symposiums in each town one or two times a year. This helps provide the venues in which people can discuss issues, ideas, and the means of protecting the practice of their own traditions that they have known for many hundreds of years.

MY LECTURES

During my tour in 2002, I visited and lectured at several schools to both students and teachers, as well as several community centers where people gathered to hear me and ask philosophical and spiritual questions. I spoke to local people as well as tribal chiefs or local government officials. Some of the students had never seen an American before.

The lectures and presentations that I gave went so well that they wanted me to return next year and spend more time in that area cultivating the values and focusing on the glories of Vedic culture and the original traditions of the region. As I get to know the people on an increasingly personal level, then the more effective I can be in working to retain the natural culture of the area and delivering genuine spiritual knowledge.

As it turned out, I was able to return to Northeast India in December and January of 2003-4. This was arranged by members of the Vanivasi Kalyan Ashrama, a group that works with local and tribal people to help preserve their culture. Our tour started in Dimapur on a day that a national *bandh* or strike was being imposed by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFAs). This is one of the groups of militant Christians. They imposed the *bandh* because they wanted to show support for those militant insurgents who were being ousted from Bhutan by the King and his army. In such a strike, no business of any kind or vehicular movement is to be conducted, or else there can be serious consequences, even getting killed. Trains and planes may move, but everyone else had to walk, and all the stores were closed. Nonetheless, we tried making our way through town in a jeep but were stopped at a road block by militants. After some conversation they let us through, only because they felt a little lenient since it was only two days before Christmas. Also, two of us looked like Western Caucasians, so they probably thought we were their Christian brothers, so they let us go through the road block, but ordered us to keep our travel to a minimum. However, if they new where we were going and our intention, they certainly would have kept us from proceeding.

We were going to the Janajati Vikas Samiti, which was founded by the Naga freedom fighter Rani Gaidinliu. This was to give talks on encouraging people to preserve their culture and resist the pressure from Christian groups to give up their own traditions and convert to Christianity. S.D. Youngwolf who was traveling with us is a member of the Southern Cherokee tribe and gave talks on the dangers of losing one's culture, and what happened when the Christians came to America and forced their doctrine on the Native American Indians and what were their strategies in doing so. He also told stories of the Cherokee traditions, and performed Cherokee songs as well as a few of his own compositions.

Then I talked on the means of saving one's tradition, the reasons for it, why it had value, and how the people of the West are increasingly looking for deeper levels of spiritual development, often by researching

and adding the ways of Eastern culture to their own lives. For this reason, in parts of America and Europe, especially France and England, Christianity is on the decline. This is quite the contrary to what the people are told by the Christian groups in India, who often tell the tribal people that they are all backwards, worshiping devils, and if they want to advance and keep up with the rest of the world, then they have to be like America, which consists of all Christian people. Yet I countered this by explaining that other religions in America are on the rise, and many people from India come to America with no expectation of converting from their religion to another, but often join a temple and participate in the ways of their own culture, while contributing to the economic and technological growth of America in general. This news often had a big impact on the views of the people who heard us. With both of us giving our talks, it was like a one-two punch, countering the propaganda that the people there had heard and are often given, and providing them more reason to have pride in their own culture. They were also impressed that two Westerners had enough respect for them to participate and interact with them and their culture.

PREVENTING LOSS OF CULTURE IN NORTHEAST INDIA

While I was traveling through Nagaland in 2003, it was obvious that there is a danger that their culture is disappearing. Now some people may say that Naga culture is not under some kind of threat, but actually it is. For example, when we did a "Naga Identity" seminar in Dimapur, one of the young girls from a Naga tribe who attended admitted she knew none of the Naga songs and few legends. This ignorance of local traditions always increases with each generation if something is not done to help preserve it. So the culture will disappear at an increasing rate with every generation. But why is it disappearing? It is not necessarily from what some people would call a natural progression of a society. It is from a more deliberate plan started by outsiders. Let me explain just a few points of consideration.

The fact is that the primary reason why the indigenous cultures of Northeast India are threatened is because of the conversion tactics that are engaged in by the western forms of monotheistic religions that have entered the area. This is primarily done by the Christian missionaries and other groups that have taken up their cause. Even though the Christians profess the desire for doing humanitarian activities, their real goal is conversion. For example, in one Christian hospital that offers free care,

which would be a good plug for the Christians, a pregnant woman registered herself for care in delivering her baby during childbirth. However, she was expected to sign papers that said she was converting to Christianity. When she refused to sign the papers, she was notified that the hospital would not take care of her without the signed papers. So, as she was nearing childbirth and hardly able to walk, she was forced to leave the hospital.

In the Western countries, Christian organizations raise money for humanitarian work with the idea of sending it to places where people are in need of it. But much of that money actually goes for conversion tactics, even to militant groups such as those in India's northeast, and for "Christian" education in the third world countries. But what is the real purpose of such education? While I was in India I read in the newspaper of how two young Indian children in a Catholic school were beaten until they were bleeding and needed medical attention. Why? Because of merely speaking Hindi in a conversation with other Indian students on the Catholic school grounds. This is the way "Christian" education forces the students to give up their native ways and forget their previous culture and language. Does this not sound similar to the tactics of the Portuguese in Goa.

Furthermore, Christianity, in the name of progress and western values, has brought the increased use of drugs and alcohol, where it had previously been limited. While I was there, I personally saw a "Christian" Christmas party at the Sabarimata Hotel where we were staying. At this party, which was for Christians only, the teenagers and young adults were charged an entrance fee to attend. Therein they would dance to pop tunes, smoke, drink alcoholic beverages where it was prohibited, and then easily associate with those of the opposite sex. Being in a hotel, they could also "follow their path of salvation" in private rooms upstairs for more intimate affairs. So, although Nagaland is a dry country and alcohol is not allowed, I saw that for Christians liquor was easily flowing. In fact, although Christian pastors have banned local alcohol, it is common knowledge that no pastor is without his liquor.

It is also interesting to note that abortion rates, which never used to be an issue there, increase by 3 or 4 times in the months of January and February. Obviously, those Christmas parties produce some unwanted results. Is this the sign of the type of progress that adopting a new western form of religion can bring? Is this the acceptable "Christian" standard that is spreading in the region? In former times the punishment for illicit sex was quite strict and severe with Nagas, even up

to being banished from the village. Or at least they would have the boy and girl marry each other. But now they are invited to join the Christians through conversion who say their local laws will no longer apply to them once they convert. Then if they do these things they will not be forced to face the consequences of the local standards. Now many illegal elements have joined Christianity on this idea of avoiding local or traditional forms of punishments simply by being Christian. In this way, they have a double standard, depending on what they want to accomplish. If easing the norms brings more converts, then it seems that it is acceptable.

In another example, the Christian churches, including the pastors and their wives, had been doing a double your money pyramid scheme, encouraging other members of the congregation to participate. But when the pyramid ran out of participants and people started losing money, there were so many complaints that the government itself stepped in to stop it. The Church was then subject to the anger of the people who lost money. They were asking what business does the church have in engaging in such duplicitous activities. But then the church put out a statement in the press merely saying that we should all simply forgive and forget. Of course, that does not help return the money to those who lost it.

Another example is that in Nagaland they have also started beauty contests to expose many girls' good looks, all in the name of progress, where modesty previously had been highly honored. The thing is, because of the increase in promiscuity, HIV/AIDS has risen dramatically amongst the Nagas where it was unheard of before. Plus, the incidents of Naga boys raping Naga girls is on the rise where previously it rarely happened. With the idea of accepting Christianity also comes the idea of adopting western forms of lifestyle, values, and habits, which are not always the most progressive or in the best interests of the people.

Christianity itself may not be the entire cause for such changes, but it is certainly being propagated by Christians that it is the main means of bringing progress to the Naga people. It is also the main factor in the local people losing their own indigenous culture, which once did not have all the problems that have now entered their homeland.

There has also been a continuous rise in crimes based on religious differences. Some of the Nagas may go to church with the Bible in one hand but after hearing the sermons can be ready to fight over religion when they come out later. A friend of mine was threatened four times at his house by men with rifles because he is not a Christian. This is an example of the fear tactics used by militant Christians in this day

and age. So where is the peace in such a divisive means of so-called religion?

We have to understand that conversion is not the simple course for social or spiritual progress. One's own culture may have more to offer than we realize. We have to take a good look at the history of the religion we are adopting before making such a decision, and Christianity has a track record of ethnic cleansing and manipulation of local people and cultures wherever it has entered, not to mention years of quarrel within its own ranks. We have a very substantiated history of that right here in America regarding the way they treated the natives when the Christians first arrived. Yet, it is often the case that you do not know what you have until you have lost it, and you find the new culture or religion is not all it was propped up to be.

For India's far northeast region, or any developing country, the real means of progress is mostly a matter of expanding your education. This does not mean you give up your tried and true traditions or cultural values. Nor does this mean that people must give up on technological advancement. No. As my own spiritual master, Srila Prabhuapda, along with others like Vivekananda, have said, the need is to combine the advancements of the West with the spiritual knowledge of the East. This is what provides for a decent and progressive society. The only need is to keep the basis of Vedic culture and your indigenous traditions, but merely add to it the modern technological developments of the West. You simply broaden your education to include the modern technologies that are helpful and applicable to the region. Include what is necessary to improve the roads and methods of transportation, the medical systems and hospitals, the communication systems, the agricultural techniques, and so on. You do not have to give up your culture or religion to do this. Keep what you have and simply add to it. Or modify the customs according to what is most appropriate to the times, but do so with proper respect for the tradition.

All the above mentioned problems do not have to be a part of society. And if they are entering into the area, you should ask why and realize that maybe you were better off before you started letting in a new and different form of religion and way of life. Often times we have seen that the loss of one's religion is the loss of identity. And that a new form of religion, especially when it promises materialistic improvement at the expense of losing your previous culture, does not provide what it had promised. In many ways it turns out to be more of a form of social manipulation and control, demanding that everyone follow one doctrine,

rather than a means of giving respect to individual development and choices.

The point to consider is that the farther a people go from their original indigenous culture and the values and principals it contained, often the worse life becomes for them. They become but slaves to a new establishment that cares little for their genuine welfare or original traditions, and more about gathering members to their own group or religion. Forgetting one's own original ethics and values is often what happens at the demands of the foreign institution or religion, thus, often furthering interest in shallow or false aims of life.

So, people of India and other old civilizations should look around and ask whether these new changes in your society are what you really want. You may find that the culture you were born with, that is part of a far older tradition, along with merely expanding your education, may actually be all that you need.

CHRISTIAN CONVERSION TACTICS IN OTHER PARTS OF INDIA

The work to convert people to Christianity also goes on intensely in other parts of India as well. For example, the Christian population in the Khandamal District of Orissa was only 6% in 1971, but has reached a level of 28% in 2008, which has had disastrous affects on the community by splitting up families and turning friends into enemies. Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati, an elderly saint, had been working in the area for around 40 years to help the tribals maintain their own culture and religion. Even though Maoist Communists announced responsibility for the shooting, it is known that the Christians had plotted to murder him for years since he was an impediment to their conversion endeavors. Their desires finally succeeded, and he was shot down in his own ashrama, near a girls' school, on August 23, 2008. His body was also hacked to pieces after his death. After his murder, three men were arrested who were Dalit-Christians who admitted that they were part of a group of 28 others in the slaying of the Swami. This crime produced many demonstrations and much discord in the area, as would be expected. But that did not seem to matter to those who wanted the Swami dead.

This only reflects the attitude of the Christians, who had also beaten to death the husband of a Hindu lady, Anjoriya Devi, in the Buxar Distrct of Orissa when he would not convert to Christianity, and they

threatened Anjoriya Devi as well. Another resident, Mithilesh Kumar, was intimidated and told that if he stayed a Hindu, he would remain poor and never get a job. Thereafter, Koran Sahay, the officer in charge of the local Kuran Sarai police station, said they had arrested two persons after investigating the complaints, explaining, "Investigations confirm there have been instances of conversions by intimidation. We have arrested two persons."

These sort of conditions and incidents caused by Christians have been going on for years in the region. Hindus often remain docile for long periods of time throughout such intimidation before they start to react and defend themselves, and many times people try to take advantage of that. The discord and animosity that result between people of the indigenous culture and newly converted Christians, who are often the most fanatic, led Swami Vivekananda to prophetically warn a hundred years ago that, "Every man going out of the Hindu pale is not only a man less, but an enemy the more." (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashram, Kolkata, 1979, Vol. V, pp.233-35)

Nonetheless, new initiatives to harvest the souls of India into Christianity continue, and intensified with the AD 2000 & Beyond project, which later changed into the Joshua Project I and then the Joshua Project II. These were to be a real steamroller of a campaign to contact many of the less reachable people of India. The area considered most important is the Gangetic belt, where 40% of the Indian population lives. It is the heartland of Hinduism, but is where the most socially deprived people exist, which is the prominent target for Christian conversion tactics. Of course, nearby is the national capital of New Delhi, which also makes it strategic and convenient. Various evangelists have also been fraudulently entering India to carry out crusades and preaching work, such as television evangelist Pat Robertson, and others. Thus, there are funds from the U.S. that are being funneled into India for conversions, which are, essentially, ripping apart the fabric of India and creating unnecessary tensions and violence because of these activities.

The Christian conversion groups put their attention on working through the schools, orphanages, and hospitals, especially in their endeavors to reach the tribal or backward classes of people in India. Orphanages in particular gather children in times of distress, such as in earthquakes, floods, etc., and raise the children to be Christian. Mission schools also work in ways to gather tribal children and then indoctrinate them into Christianity. Hospitals are also a means to target people in distress, often providing free medical facility, if the people agree to be or

become Christian. Once a church is established in a town or village, focus on the women of the community is vital since they are most often the keepers of the faith in the family. Once the women spread their work, then others in the family, such as the children, generally follow. And since women like to associate with one another, one Christian lady can influence other village women to follow her to church or Bible classes.

Other tactics include new water wells being established in poor villages, but in front of a church where the pastor makes sure no non-Christians are allowed to draw water, unless they are prepared to convert. Or large corporations hire people for upper management only if they are Christian. In these and other ways, the plan is to convert with goods and allurements.

As India is increasingly targeted for conversion work, it is surprising that in other countries like Italy, the believers have dropped to only 3% in Rome. In other parts of the world, there is a growing interest in returning to the indigenous traditions, for which people undergo a ritual called being de-baptized out of Christianity. In Lithuania also, a country that was one of the last to be taken by Christianity, as a friend of mine from that country told me, people are returning to their indigenous roots, which are much like the Vedic tradition. They are also undergoing a de-baptizing ritual and leaving Christianity. In England it is said that only 10% of the population bother to go to church. In Europe also the number of Christians is decreasing, and in France the number of priests is so low that there is only one for every six Catholic churches. So it seems like the simple people of India are accepting the very aspects of Christianity that are simultaneously being given up or rejected by Westerners in various parts of the world. Therefore, should not the Christian church work to gain back all those who are leaving it instead of merely trying to focus on the country of India?

The reason is that as Peter Wagner, coordinator for the AD 2000 United Prayer Mobilization Network says on its website, "Of all the nations in the world, India has the highest potential of fruitful investment of evangelistic effort at this time. It is the place to invest time, energy and resources." This means that their interest in India will increase before it decreases. And that they count their profits in terms of the converts they make more than the goodwill they say they wish to spread, which, as we have described, is doing more to divide the country than uniting it.

DENIGRATION OF THE VEDIC TRADITION

Article 25(1) of the Constitution of India reads, "Subject to the public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." However, to help clarify this, the Supreme Court ruled in 1977 that "propagate" cannot be interpreted as right to convert. The fact that it made such interpretation is because the Petitioner believed that conversion had constitutional sanction because of use of the word "propagate." Thus, because of the Supreme Court's ruling, previously overt programs of conversion have become clandestine. But because of a lack of clear laws to prevent forcible conversions and the denigration of Hinduism, other religions have been freely if not openly engaged in belittling the Vedic tradition in any way they want. This is what has caused many disputes and quarrles in the social fabric of India.

For many years the Christians have been presenting all kinds of distortions about the Vedic culture in a deliberate attempt to dissuade people from being Hindus and to try to persuade people to become Christians. This has gone on in many parts of India. It is one thing to preach on the basis of the Bible's purity or the teachings of Jesus, but it is quite another to deliberately distribute literature that specifically demeans and warps the true meaning of the Vedic culture, and, thus, provokes the anger of the Hindus or local people. Some of this literature that is passed out by Christians and the missionaries says such things like how certain divinities were prostitutes, or defames the character of Krishna and Rama, or says that other divinities were but victims of lust, or promotes falsehoods about Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, the details of which I will not repeat here.

These accusations in the Christian literature really show their ignorance and how much they lack in true understanding of the Vedic divinities and the traditions. But they continued to say that the Hindus were worshiping false gods, and that they should be delivered from such a dark path. However, I say that if you really want to question the characteristics of a god, look at the one in the Old Testament of the Bible. The attacks, atrocities, killing of people, sending horrendous diseases, etc., that are attributed to and admitted by that God can surely be called into question for anyone who really studies the Bible. He was always getting mad at His own people, calling them sinners, blasphemers, etc., and He is supposed to be a merciful God, a God of love?

In other Christian literature, things that are stated include that new Christians should destroy the places of worship of the tribal people, and other things that directly hurt the sentiments of the people. This is an attempt to directly cause provocation and create serious reactions and violence. Is this necessary?

Because of these various reasons, Hindus finally got angry at the booklets the Christians were distributing and some of them attacked the houses, halls, and churches that stored such material. The biased "secular" national media got a hold of the stories and amplified them into being attacks against the churches because of fanatical impulses. But that was not the case at all. However, it is interesting that the state or local media gave more accurate versions of the incidents. But then the Christians cried out against the attacks, saying they were done on innocent people by fundamentalist fanatics. Hardly. The Christians were also throwing stones, disrupting traffic, deliberately agitating the situation, and when the police were called in they found guns after entering the churches.

The real point is that if the Christians were so loving and merciful, meaning no harm to anyone, why would they want or arrange for the murder of an old Hindu priest who had worked to uphold the rights of the tribals and villagers who did not convert to Christianity? It almost sounds the same as when the Catholic Francis Xavier complained that if it was not for the Brahmanas of the area, people would more easily convert to Christianity. And why would they deliberately distribute literature that is bound to provoke reactions?

The ultimate point is that whether Christianity means to be or not, it is showing itself as a hostile ideology, using spurious and fanatic literature suggesting that human beings are flawed and can only be redeemed by converting to a particular faith. However, conversion is also only a matter of faith. And why do they target Hindus? Because it is obvious that they cannot tolerate the Vedic tradition which states that everyone is essentially good and spiritual in nature, and only needs to revive their connection with God through the path of Dharma, not through some kind of conversion.

Sanatana-dharma advocates the freedom of the individual to discover the spirituality that is best for each person as he or she sees fit through the natural process of inquiry and experience, not through a forced conversion. But isn't the desire to destroy Dharma itself *adharmic*, or hostile to Dharmic spirituality? Dharma is light, and *adharma* is darkness. Dharma is freedom, *adharma* is forced aggression, and the loss of freedom and the limitation of choice. Thus, the Vedic

tradition offers all kinds of choices, but does not approve of aggressive force to make people comply with only one way of spirituality. Therefore, as long as Dharma exists, *adharma* or darkness cannot prevail forever. Thus, it is our duty to defend Dharma for the benefit of everyone. This is why for aggressive Christianity and fanatical Islam to continue, they must annihilate the freedom of Dharma found in Hinduism, which means Hinduism must end for them to more freely expand.

In this way, this freedom of self-inquiry seems to make the mere presence of the Vedic path and its followers a danger to all non-Hindus, especially Christians and Muslims. Why? Why is it that they seemed to have declared war on Hindus?

Hindus can live without the aggressive pursuance of pressing their ideologies on others, and do not give any importance to evangelizing or jihad. Is this a reason why the Vedic traditions have continued to this day? However, would Christians and Muslims also continue for as long if they would stop forcing their theocracy on others through the use of fear of hell and damnation, punishment, or other forceful tactics? Or would they begin to fade from the face of the earth if they used only the basis of whatever deep spirituality they could find in their own traditions? But is this not one of the reasons why wherever Christianity or Islam has gone throughout history, they have annihilated all other faiths? And when other faiths have resisted or fought back, these monotheistic religions portray themselves as martyrs and victims. But as soon as they get a little strength, they attack with vengeance as if struggling for political conquest. Or is that actually what they want—political power? If so, this would mean that more important than saving souls is the subjugation of people for political influence and dominance.

Furthermore, this would indicate that conversion in India would be the creation of a native constituency that will be subjected to the dictates of either Rome or the West if they become Christians, or the Nation of Islam if they become Muslims. And we have already seen many politicians of India who advocate either the conversion or the destruction of Hindus and their temples and monuments. We can also observe that these diabolical actions are meant to weaken the Hindu determination to maintain and protect their culture, while allowing a freer hand to those engaged in harvesting the souls of India and creating *jihadi* camps on Indian soil that would be useful for any eventual attack by Pakistan on India. This also means that those Indians who support this are but traitors to Hinduism and the motherland of India.

If India is going to make sure that such a scenario is preventable, their must be proper leadership for the future of their civilization, and the need for a pro-active spirit among the masses. Otherwise, we have but a continuation of the assault on India and attempts at tyranny that have happened in the past by invading forces. All such attempts must be crushed if we are going to maintain a positive future for India, and our freedom of religion and preservation of our Dharmic culture. We should not allow for the same mistakes of long-ago to happen again.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Threat Against Hindu Temples and Vedic Culture by India's Government

This chapter shows how the Indian government and various politicians purposely jeopardizing the future of Hindu temples and Vedic culture in general. With a little attention, anyone can see how Hindu institutions and Hinduism in India are unfairly targeted by a combination of vote bank politics and unscrupulous politicians and businessmen. Particularly alarming is the destruction of Hindu institutions and the illegal mass conversions by other religions.

Through the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act (HRCE Act) of 1951, state governments have appointed managers to the boards of temples in the name of better administration, while mosques and churches are completely autonomous. This Act allowed the state governments and politicians to take over thousands of Hindu temples and maintain complete control over these temples and their property. Many abuses are committed by multiple state governments using the power accorded through this Act. Then they can sell the temple assets and properties and use the money in any way they choose. Often the temple and the devotees who patronize them do not see any of the money, nor does it come back to assist the Hindu community to which the temple belongs. Some of this money is that which is directly donated by the pilgrims and devotees who attend the temple, given for the temple upkeep, or for the priests and deities. However, some of the money is disbursed by the government for ulterior causes or to other non-profit organizations based on political connections.

In Andhra Pradesh under the Chief Minister, tens of thousands of acres of temple lands are sold away leaving temples with little economic basis. This is done without the permission of the local Hindu community. The state government and the endowments department, whose duty is to safeguard the temple properties, have turned a blind eye to such

encroachments or take overs of temple properties. The state government recently went to the extent of regularizing encroachments at nominal prices. These encroachments are often found to be closely associated to various political parties, completely outside any religious purpose.

In Andhra Pradesh, Hindu temples, institutions, and Hinduism itself are illegally targeted by the crusade of the government. Under the Temple Empowerment Act, about 34,000 temples had come under government control. Only 18% of the revenue of these temples is said to be given back for temple purposes, while the remaining 82% is used for other things by the government at their discretion. Such looting, massive sale of temple lands, demolition of temples, encroachments of temple properties, and the utilization of aggressive religious conversion tactics by Christians in the vicinity of temples is and has been occurring all over Andhra Pradesh. The government, which is supposed to be a protector has become a destroyer of the culture, which threatens the very existence of Hindu institutions. Only after large public protests has the state government given back a majority of the temples, yet the most profitable were still kept under state control.

Even the world famous sacred temple at Tirumala-Tirupati is not spared. This temple collects over Rs. 3,100 crores (tens of millions) every year, and the state government has not denied the charge that as much as 85% of this is transferred to the state exchequer, much of which goes to causes that are not connected with the Hindu community or Vedic temples. The government also attempted to take over 5 out of 7 Tirumala hills for churches and tourism for the profit of development companies and other affiliates not connected with the temple. The 1000 pillar Mantapam hall was illegally demolished. Recently, in response to Sri Chinnajeeyar Swami's petition, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has declared the demolition illegal and instructed the TTD management at Tirupati to reconstruct it. If anyone has seen the Tirupati temple and the difference there is without the 1000 pillar hall, it is shocking.

The Andhra Pradesh government also allowed the demolition of at least 10 temples for the construction of a golf course. Imagine the outcry, protests, and riots that would have happened if that would be suggested for a mosque. The son of the Chief Minister even blew up the Sunkulamma Hindu Temple in Anantapur, and his brother, by constructing his own building, has encroached on Gurukula trust lands worth crores (tens of millions) of rupees. While taking extra precautions to protect churches and mosques with money from the state treasury, the government has been selling or donating, for various government schemes and non-Hindu purposes, tens of thousands of acres of temple

lands worth thousands of crores of rupees that are meant for the perpetual sustenance of the temples. This will irreparably cripple these Hindu institutions. Of course, that seems to be part of the plan.

The temples and Maths that did not earlier come under government supervision are taken into government control for selling away their lands. The State Endowment Board with 77,000 employees, all of whom are supported by 15-18 percent of the income from 33,000 temples, has done little for the welfare of the Hindu institutions. At the same time, priests of temples are penniless and temples are decaying due to lack of maintenance. Hindu priests no longer want to train children in priestly activities for lack of economical basis. This seems to be the goal of the government to systematically wipe out Vedic culture across India.

Even while this is going on, the Andhra Pradesh government pays 12,000 rupees per pilgrim for the Haj trip to Mecca each year, and is considering proposals to pay Christians for trips to Bethlehem. At the same time, the government has imposed a 50% raise on the fares of state buses on MahaShivaratri festival day, like a tax that takes advantage of the Hindu community and makes it even more difficult for them to observe their own holidays. This is not unlike the *jizya* tax the Muslims imposed on Hindus years ago just for being Hindus. Furthermore, the most important Hindu holidays, such as RamaNavami, are being taken off the government holiday list to be replaced by secular holidays.

The net result of this strategic and planned selling of all temple properties, along with taxing the Hindu community while providing funds for Christian purposes, seems to be designed to systematically and completely cripple Hindu institutions in the state with little hope for their survival. The Andhra Pradesh government Order 21 gave crores (tens of millions) of rupees for the renovation and construction of churches, thus helping to pave the way for major Christianization of the state using illegal techniques for mass conversions. Almost all these activities are a violation of the Indian constitution that is supposed to separate the state and religion. The government also controls the media that ignore any Hindu representation. Even the rare newspapers like Eenadu that do represent the Hindu view of things are persecuted by unfair tax raids, and attempts to stop their Hindu devotional telecasts. They then use the secular news media to spread false claims of attacks on Christians by fundamentalist Hindus, and to defame popular Vedic saints who make great strides for the Dharmic cause. Their next step has been to convert movie stars to gain influential voices, and with large amounts of money buy the cooperation of more politicians.

In Karnataka, for example, in 2003, as reported by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and in "India Today", 79 crores ($790,000,000) was collected from about two lakh (200,000) temples. From that, temples received 7 crores ($70,000,000) for their maintenance, Muslim Madrassas and the Haj subsidy (for the trip to Mecca) was given 59 crores, and churches about 13 crores. Because of tactics like this, twenty-five percent of the two lakh temples i.e., about 50,000 in Karnataka, will be closed down for lack of resources. The only way the government can continue to do this is because people have not stood up enough to stop it.

In Kerala, funds from the Guruvayur temple are diverted to other government projects denying improvements to 45 Hindu temples. Land belonging to the Ayyappa temple (in Sabarimala) has been grabbed and church backed encroaches are occupying huge areas of forestland running into thousands of acres near Sabarimala. The communist state government of Kerala, which naturally has little to no respect for the Vedic culture and religion, wants to pass an ordinance to disband the Travancore and Cochin Autonomous Devaswom Boards (TCDB) and take over their limited independent authority of 1800 Hindu temples. In this way, the looting of temple finances and properties continues unabated. It is said that this state alone has 29,000 Christian missionaries and clergy and 19,000 in Muslim counterparts whose main preoccupation is conversion of Hindus. Kerala is a precursor for the state of things to come for the Hindu community in India. With a 56 percent Hindu population, it hardly controls 25 percent of the economy.

The Maharasthra state government has been moving to pass a bill that would enable it to take over the 450,000 Hindu temples in the state. This would supply a huge amount of revenue to correct the state's bankrupt condition after its bad economic policies. So, now that the state politicians have ruined the financial condition of the state, they want to take money from the Hindu temples and community to adjust the situation. This is but another crime against India and its Vedic culture at the hands of its incompetent political leaders.

This is a precursor to repeat the process already happening in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala. Articles 25 and 26 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees public establishment and maintenance of religious institutions and to administer such property in accordance with law, has been completely ignored toward Hindu foundations. While looting Hindu institutions, the Government subsidizes the "Haj" pilgrimage for the Muslims to the tune of Rs. 380 crores annually (including subsidy to airlines), and provides 1000 crores per year for the salary of Imams, and provides funds to churches.

You may be questioining why the same pilgrimage privileges are not given to Hindus to go to Tirupathi, Varanasi, Rameswaram, Ayodhya, Dwaraka, Badarinath, etc? It is very simple, Hindu brothers and sisters are in deep slumber. They seem to be in denial, are pacifists, and are certainly disunited. Plus, they do not seem to know what to do or what plan to use. Otherwise, why should they not stand up to demand the same privileges, or to stop this kind of unfair discrimination?

The state government of Bihar has also paved the way for the loss of Rs. 2000 crores of temple owned property because of its Endowments department, according to the religious trust Administrator. In Orissa, the state government intends to sell over 70,000 acres of endowment lands from the Jagannatha Temple, the proceeds of which would solve a huge financial crunch brought about by its own mismanagement of temple assets. The state government of Rajasthan also wants to auction various Hindu temples to the highest bidder, regardless of whether they are Hindu or not. This flagrant diversion of wealth from Hindu temples is directly opposite the ideal of a secular country, and a bold travesty of the principle of separation of church and state.

Why such occurrences are so often not known is that Indian media, especially the English television and press, are often anti-Hindu in their approach, and, thus, not inclined to give much coverage, and certainly no sympathy, for anything that may affect the Hindu community. Therefore, such government actions that play against the Hindu community go on without much or any attention attracted to them. If it was not for the attention drawn to these matters by such organizations as the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, a large collection of spiritual authorities in India convened by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, or the Global Hindu Heritage Foundation in the U.S., there would probably be little organized protest of such activities against the state governments of India. However, it is because of these organizations and the volunteers who work with them that the public is being notified and called to action to do something about this. And also why I am writing about it here. In this way, the constitutional validity of the HRCE Act is being challenged. It is time that the same rights as the minority religions of India are given to the majority Hindus and followers of the ancient Vedic Dharma.

PROTECTING VEDIC TEMPLES

It is obvious that the current laws in the country are discriminatory and against Hindu religious institutions, and it is important that Hindus demand that the government accord Hindu institutions the same status as Muslim and Christian institutions. The existence of the Hindu majority of India is being threatened in their own homeland. Selfish politicians seem to be bent on destroying the Vedic Dharma.

It is a strange thing to see, at least for me, when the bulk of the Hindu population does not protest when a strong reaction should naturally be there. You easily see a protest against any Hindu activity from the media, the so-called secularists and intellectuals and any other anti-Hindus. But the Hindu majority does not speak out. This may also be due to the continued influence of a foreign rule, or a slave mentality that remains after so many generations of being dominated by outsiders. But this will not help to preserve the culture. There is a need for another leader who can help them focus their energy in a constructive way for them to rise up in a defensive manner.

It may also be the result of living under a constitution that does not hold the values of the Vedic path. If the state does not recognize your personal culture as a citizen of Dharma, then you will need to fight against it. Otherwise, your own values, tradition, and the Vedic path itself may begin to wane and even you will lose the rights to pass it along to your children in an effective manner.

If the state is not taking care of your heritage, preserving your religion and traditions, and all the monuments or temples that are meant to uphold your culture, then you must refuse to merely be a citizen of the Republic, and be a citizen of Bharata Varsha, the Vedic society.

There are many intellectuals in America, I know as I am one of those who wonder why the Indian people tolerate so much while they see their culture being denigrated by their own so-called leaders, the politicians who have been voted into office. There are many Westerners that are sympathetic to the Vedic path and what it has offered. But, when they hear of the injustice within the Indian country, how others have the rights and government-assisted funds to go on the Haj pilgrimage, or how minorities have rights and funds to build and operate their own schools and churches, then they wonder why do the majority Hindus tolerate this and not demand equal rights?

The trouble can be found in the Indian constitution itself, which was formed by those who had less respect for Vedic society and provided

laws to protect the minorities at the expense of the majority. The anti-Hindu, anti-India attitude must be changed. If we are going to see the continuation of the tradition that gave the world Yoga, then we must work against this neglect toward the profound history of India and its unique and deep Vedic tradition. Every religion should be given the same rights by establishing a uniform code of conduct that every Indian must follow, not that the Hindus are second class because the Muslims or Christians are minorities and must be offered extra rights and advantages, as outlined in the constitution. As these minorities have used these rights for their own advantages, and they have grown to a sizable society that can take care of themselves, then they no longer need these extra privileges. Thus, the constitution can be changed to provide a uniform code for everyone, and the people should demand it so that everyone can live under the same rules and laws, without some minorities having special privileges. This should be the goal of a true democracy, if that is what India is going to be. And there should be no fear to express this. This should be the goal. Otherwise, if equal rights and a uniform code are not to be found in India, then India is not a true democracy.

Therefore, readers are requested not to merely stand by and hope that nothing will happen to Hindu Vedic Dharma, the culture that brought us the system of meditation, pranayama, and so many other things. One thousand years of foreign rule has resulted in the loss of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the cultural loss of Kashmir. Today a half-million Kashmiri pundits are living as refugees in their own mother land for more than a decade and are dying in large numbers. There has also been the cultural loss of the four states of northeast India which were a Hindu majority as recently as 1948. Next in line for losing its traditional culture is Andhra Pradesh.

Hindus who are complacent need to understand the consequences if the current situation continues. Missionaries with the help of leftists and crooked politicians, pseudo-secularists, working in a democracy with a highly corrupt political system, a culturally deprived intelligentsia, with billions of dollars and little scruples, have the potential to convert a majority of India's population away from the culture of their homeland in just a few years. This, along with vote bank politics, can result in complete marginalization of Hindus and the division of India. In such a situation, those who do not convert will be at an enormous disadvantage economically and spiritually.

Any Hindu or Dharmist who is more concerned with himself, his family, and his own personal occupational advancement over and above

his contribution to his society and culture, only decreases the future well-being of them and its traditions, and reduces his own participation in securing a positive future for them.

Nowhere in the free, democratic world are the religious institutions managed, maligned, and controlled by the government, thus denying the religious freedom of the people of the country. But it is happening to Hindus in India. Government officials have taken control of Hindu temples because they smell money in them, they recognize the indifference of Hindus, they are aware of the unlimited patience and tolerance of Hindus, they also know that it is not in the blood of Hindus to go to the streets to demonstrate, destroy property, threaten, loot, harm, and kill. They also do not vote as a block in the elections like the Christians and Muslims. The government has usurped the freedom of Hindus to manage their temples, denied their human rights, and engaged in continued discrimination of Hindus.

Times have changed. The threat to the survival of Hindu civilization is real. Billions of dollars are pouring into India every year for conversion purposes to both the Christian and Islamic groups. Even Mahatma Gandhi who fought all of his life for social justice and religious tolerance called religious conversions by missionaries the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth.

Many Hindus are sitting and watching the demise of their culture. Hindus should not sit quiet, but must be active. They need to contribute generously to promote their culture. They have to exercise their right to fight for their freedom. They need to express their views loud and clear. It is time for all of us to wake up and see what is happening to our Hindu culture before we lose the freedom to practice it. As I have said numerous times, the way things are going we practically have more freedom to practice the Vedic traditions in America than in India. If we are not careful, in the future we may have to import the Vedic path back to India from America.

Another example of the instrumental process of losing the Vedic culture and accurate rendition of India's past is that in 1982, the (NCERT) National Council of Educational Research and Training issued a directive for the rewriting of school texts. It stipulated that the "characterization of the medieval period as a time of conflict between Hindus and Moslems is forbidden." Thus, denial of history, or negationism, has become India's official educational policy. In this case, how will people ever understand or know of the real history of India and the trials, tribulations, and sacrifices that were made in order for their Vedic tradition to endure? Hence, every Hindu has an obligation to read

and learn the history of our forefathers who were subjected to violence, cruelty, atrocities, and carnage. Such sacrifices under the torture of the invaders of India were the only way that we still have the freedom to participate in the Vedic customs that still exist today.

It is time for all Hindus and supporters of Vedic culture to stand strong for Dharma and to unite and work together to preserve and protect their culture and glorious past by consolidating their votes to remove those politicians who are not supportive of Vedic Dharma, and to bring in those who are. We must remove all superficial differences among the numerous Hindu organizations and realize that without a unified platform, all forms of discord will be taken advantage of by those who work against us and wish to see the demise of Vedic culture. This must never happen, and we can all work together to prevent it. Now is the time to work together more than ever.

In conclusion, we need to understand that it is necessary for all Hindus across the globe to participate in the protection and even revival of the Hindu heritage, in freeing the temples from government control, and in bringing unity among different sects, *sampradayas*, and *varnas* or castes. There is a need in preserving and protecting the rights of Hindus in different countries, and in restoring our prestige, honor, and the essence of the Vedic tradition. Our motto should be "Let us work together to protect, preserve, and promote our Vedic/Hindu culture."

The point is that if Hindus do not preserve their culture, who will preserve it? If Hindus do not promote their culture, who will do it? If Hindus do not learn and practice their culture, who will do it? If Hindus do not defend their culture, who will do it? Therefore, let us all join our hands and pray that we all will serve as guardians and champions of our heritage, so that we will not be condemned or mistreated as we have in the past, and that our rights to observe our Vedic traditions will go on long into the future.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Some of the Present Threats and Challenges

Even though things in India are improving greatly with every year that goes by, there are still a good many challenges and threats against the culture and country. And what follows are just some of the most noted problems that India must face and deal with that affect the future well-being of the country, its spiritual heritage, and its standing in world opinion if it is to become an growing force in the world and its economy. There are, of course, many other issues that exist besides the ones that follow, but these I feel are some of the most prominent.

HINDUS NEED TO BE AND DO MORE

We still see that the history books of India, not only within the country, but also in other nations such as the West, have maligned, changed, or even erased various episodes that took place that were utterly violent and cruel against the people of India, especially those who followed the Vedic traditions. Some of the worst holocausts in world history took place in India that has practically been forgotten. Even now, obvious ethnic cleansing has been going on in places such as Kashmir where nearly 400,000 Kashmiri pundits have had to flee their homeland of 5000 years to become refugees in their own country of India. We also see the persecution in Bangladesh and Pakistan against Hindus that has been unnoticed by the Western media.

In fact, you could say that even the Indian leadership has done little to protect their own people, or to preserve the reality of the history and hardships of its nation. The Jews, on the other hand, have made it an honor to make sure the world never forgets what has happened to them, while in India it is almost as if they would rather the world remain asleep to what has actually taken place against Hindu society. As I stated in the beginning of this book, it is not a matter of vengeance or to invoke old

hatreds to remember the real history of India, but it is a matter of making sure we do not allow the same mistakes to reoccur, and to take notice of the freedom fighters who have worked hard and even gave their lives for the future of India and our right to continue to observe and participate in the Vedic tradition.

The problem with Hindus today is that they are not what they need to be. They are not as united as they should be, nor do they stand strongly enough for Dharma and their culture. We have seen India already become divided and chopped up into portions that were once the cradle of Vedic society and civilization. As with Kashmir, the pundits are no longer the honored citizens in their own homeland. And who has come to their defense? Who has become outraged by this travesty? Everyone should be, but few people have stood up to voice their concern. In such as case, how many more of such instances might take place with the same silence? There are those who are counting on this inaction and silence. And such being the case, how much more will India and its people lose from its country? How much more will India be chopped up, with more sections being sliced off to be possessed by another foreign government? Therefore, it is imperative that Hindus learn how to be pro-active and stand up for themselves and their fellow Hindus in the Global Vedic Community.

LACK OF UNITY

Lack of unity has always been a major weakness of the people in India. This can still be observed in the lack of cooperation between the groups and sects of the Vedic/Hindu masters and spiritual guides. There are numerous Swamis and Vedic teachers and yoga instructors who hold a powerful sway over large groups of people. But they are mostly stuck in their own group under their main teacher or master without much interaction with other organizations. Thus, the national unity that could save India and its Vedic tradition is not there. It is imperative that all spiritual teachers create a level of cooperation in which they, along with their thousands of followers, can all work together.

One example of this is Swami Dayananda Saraswati from Coinbatore who has initiated the Acharya Sabha, a national organization wherein over 140 of the main acharyas and heads of various *sampradayas* and spiritual institutions and groups assemble for an annual gathering to discuss the major issues that affect them all. This has become a powerful group. Issues include how to preserve the culture and

its teachings, how to save its temples and monuments, and what best to do to prepare for its future. Naturally, many details are ironed out in a way that one or two groups together could not do compared to the host of organizations that can unite and make decisions on such matters. Then they can also support each of their endeavors by encouraging their followers and congregations to act in assistance with such decisions. This is very unifying, positive, and powerful. They could even determine the direction of Indian politics by group vote blocks, voting for those politicians who would be most likely to assist in preserving the Vedic culture in the proper way for India.

I have always said: If Hindus and Dharmists across India and around the world, from all classes and castes, could ever unite and work together, they could change the course of their cultural history in 18 days (the number of days of the Kuruksetra war). From this unity we could see miracles develop in ways that had not been witnessed before. There must be the promotion of a Global Vedic Community and a recognition that all Hindus or Dharmists are members of that community, no mater where they are.

This unity could come about by everyone recognizing that all people have something valid to offer. That all people of all classes should be cared for, especially in regard to India. The diseased and sick should be attended to, and all people should have access to the facilities by which they can determine their own future, whether this is education, health care, modern technology, and the means to own or use land to farm and grow agricultural necessities. By developing the means for this to happen could pave the way for a rejuvenation in Hindu nationalism, if only the leaders can provide the means for this to happen without allowing corruption to distract them or misdirect them for selfish concerns, which in the end stifles everything.

THE WANING OF VEDIC/HINDU SOCIETY

There are those who may say that Vedic society will last forever, just as the Vedic tradition is also eternal. Yes, it may last forever, since it is established in a spiritual vibration, which is why it is called Sanatana-dharma. But we have already seen how the once large area of Bharata Varsha has lost the areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, and other regions of greater India. We have to recognize that Arjuna was directed by Lord Krishna to fight for Dharma, without which much of the kingdom and the moral principles that maintained the area would have

been lost. We must realize what may have happened if Arjuna would have lost the war, and *adharma* would have overpowered Dharma. The whole area of India would have been completely different, and the Vedic spiritual heritage would have been greatly reduced. That was what was defended by that war. And that is why Lord Krishna instructed Arjuna to do his duty as a Kshatriya and fight. So how can we do nothing and expect that things will continue as we presently know them? How can we sit back and watch as other cultures and religions come into India with the idea of increasing their power and influence, and even working to diminish Vedic Dharma. No, things will gradually dwindle and become lost if we do not defend Dharma.

Naturally, there will always be those who will search out the eternal spiritual truths as explained in the Vedic literature for their own spiritual development and self-realization. But if we remain blind to the threats and challenges that are taking place against the future of Sanatana-dharma, we could nonetheless witness a great eclipse of the Vedic culture and society. This is what the Vedic prophesies mention that can happen. If there is no one to sustain and follow the Vedic traditions, and to stand up to preserve and protect them, they will indeed gradually become hidden and lost to the eyes of humanity. Thus, society will be left without direction, like a ship without a rudder, a fool's paradise, which will leave planet earth to be little more than a place of suffering and insufficient happiness. Without the eternal spiritual truths that we find in Sanatana-dharma, the other religions will act as the seeds of quarrel and disunity and war, as we can see them doing now. We must clearly realize that genuine spirituality is the means to unite humanity, while common religion and its ethnic emphasis and shallow dogmatic principles divides humanity. It is our responsibility and duty to do better than that.

UNEQUAL WORLD PRESS

Another problem India faces is the unequal world press coverage of what happens in this country. The media are always ready to spread how minorities, such as Christians and Muslims, may apparently be persecuted, but when it comes to the constant and humongous atrocities against Hindus, the media is practically silent. India has a better record internationally regarding human rights than most countries, especially Arab and Islamic countries, but if one thing goes wrong, then the whole world crowds around to know of it and denounce it. However, the

Gujarat riots in 2002 went overboard and never should have happened or gone to the extent that they did. It was too much, but a sign that Muslims should tread more carefully and not think that the Hindus will never react to the atrocities that are committed against them, which in many cases they do not. Yet, when terrorists bomb Mumbai, or blast buses of Hindus in Kashmir, or when Christian converts feel they need to pull down temples and disgrace Vedic deities without trying to live harmoniously with other religions, or a host of other atrocities that have been committed against the Indian Hindus that I could explain, there often is not even a mention of it on the news. The world does not know. Yet, how many of such incidents can take place before there is finally a reaction? And then everyone wonders why, or is surprised that Hindus react against such happenings.

The elite of India may indeed call out that anyone who defends their culture or country belong to the Hindutva mindset, or to the attempt to saffronize the nation, but that is only because they can hide behind their walls that have been provided by the privileges they still hold. That is because they have become victims of the false propaganda of the media or other elitists. If the country becomes increasingly divided and sliced away to be possessed by others, and India is left to dwindle in her development, such privileges and opportunities to criticize their own countrymen for the sacrifices they have made to preserve the Vedic culture will also become increasingly limited and lost. Then they may reflect back that working to protect their traditions may not have been such a bad idea. But if they wait too long, it may simply become too late, and, thus, they will also lose the facilities they once enjoyed, or will be forced to drastically change their own lifestyle to that of foreign demands. We cannot afford to be complacent.

TERRORISM AND THE LOSS OF HINDUS AROUND INDIA

We may think that the Hindu population and society will always be strong, or at least survive in India. Some people may think that the complete loss of Vedic culture and those who follow it will never happen. They may think that there will always be Sanatana-dharma because it is an eternal culture, related to the spiritual identity of the living being. But if we look around, we can certainly see how Hindus have greatly been reduced in India's neighboring countries, which were once part of the land of India, Bharatha Varsha, long ago. If it can happen there, then what is to prevent it from happening in India? Let us

take a look at some of the information that was gathered by the Hindu American Foundation in their report, *Hindus in South Asia and the Diaspora: A Survey of Human Rights 2006.*

Afghanistan, for example, was a part of the Vedic society 1000 years ago, as far back as 3000 BCE, along with Pakistan and Bangladesh. But now these areas have been ethnically cleansed, the Hindu population has been practically wiped out. The Taliban in Afghanistan has destroyed numerous Vedic temples, which have not been restored, or have been occupied by Muslim groups. Thus, there are hardly any Vedic institutions or places of worship in Afghanistan today. Many Hindus have also been driven out of Afghanistan, and there exists no facilities for them to return from exile even if they wanted to. The Hindus who remain are under intense vulnerability by the Taliban and other Muslim extremists. Though Hindus have naturally lived in that area for thousands of years, presently they occupy only 1% of the population of the country.

Bangladesh was carved out of India in 1947. At that time Hindus occupied about 30% of the population of Bangladesh. Then, by 1991, 20 million Hindus were reported as "missing," and 5 million have been forcibly converted to Islam. By 2007 it is reported that Hindus comprise only 5% or less of the population. Muslims continue to persecute and engage in ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Bangladesh through acts of murder, rape, kidnappings, temple destruction, and terrorist intimidation against families and women and girls. Under the Enemy Property Act, and the Vested Property Act of 1974 which identifies Hindus as enemies of the state, over 45% of lands confiscated from Hindus between 2001 and 2006 were to the benefit of Muslims belonging to the Islamic Bangladesh National Party. Therefore, it looks as though the continued terrorist activities against Hindus of Bangladesh will continue until most if not all will one day be forced out of the country.

Jammu and Kashmir have been a part of the Vedic culture for thousands of years, being ruled by Hindu kings until 1339. It remains a part of India due to the choice of its ruler in 1947 when he sought India's protection from Pakistan, which had invaded Kashmir. Since the mid to late 1980s, Islamic terrorists from Pakistan and Afghanistan have targeted Kashmir for its own, and have engaged in massive ethnic cleansing of Hindus from India's Kashmir Valley, mostly by Pakistan-sponsored Islamic militants. Over the last 20 years or so, ethnic cleansing, killings, and terrorism of the worst kind has reduced the Hindu population by 400,000, from 60% to under 40% from 1991 to 2001, according to census reports. Thus, as many as 350,000 to 400,000

Hindus have been driven out of Kashmir, forcing them to live as refugees in their own country of India, sheltered in temporary and miserable camps in Jammu and elsewhere. Many of the Hindus in Kashmir have been brutally killed, raped, or intimidated to the point of leaving the area to save their life. Thus, they had to flee and leave all of their property and belongings behind, only for it to be confiscated by the Muslims. As it stands today, there are virtually no Hindus left in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Stories abound about how Hindus have been terrorized in Kashmir.

Pakistan is another area that was naturally a major part of the Vedic tradition for many years. It was carved out of India in 1947 to be taken as another chunk of India to be given to someone else, to appease the Muslims by allowing them to have their own country and not be forced to live with the Hindus in India. At that time, Hindus occupied about 25% of the population. But through constant intimidation, murder, rape, forced conversions, especially of Hindu girls, the destruction of Vedic temples, theft and looting of property and land that belong to Hindus, etc., now the Hindu population in Pakistan is only 1% and decreasing. Even school textbooks promote Islam while spreading hatred for other religions and intolerance for non-Muslims, including Hindus. An alarming number of reports state how Hindu girls are kidnapped, raped, and then forced to accept Islam against their will, or even marry Muslim boys. If they protest, threats toward their family are made, and, thus, they must surrender to their fate. An increasing number of Hindus in Pakistan feel completely insecure, and will likely have to join the ranks of those who have exited the country to go to India if they expect to remain Hindu. Pakistan, which has proclaimed itself to be an Islamic Republic, continues to be a hub of Islamic terror networks. Violence against women is also rampant, where a woman is raped on average of every two hours, and at least ten women die every day in “honor” killings.

Bhutan is a country on the northern border of India. Bhutan has been a multi-religious and multi-cultural country, but has been ruled by an absolute monarchy since 1907. It was the home of numerous Hindus for many years. However, in the early 1990s Bhutan evicted over 100,000 Hindus, as well as Nyingmapa Bhuddhists, from the southern and eastern regions. Most of them are living in refugee camps in Nepal, managed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. But 20,000 are scattered outside the camps in Nepal or India without any help or legal status.

Sri Lanka also was naturally a part of India's Vedic tradition for many years, and has been accepted as an important place included in the pastimes described in the classic epic *Ramayana*. But there has been a long conflict between the Sinhala-majority Sri Lankan government and the Tamil groups. This has been most detrimental to all Sri Lankan people, especially the Hindu minority which experiences an undue amount of violence and displacement.

Other places such as Malaysia (6.3% Hindu), the Fiji Islands (of which 34% of the population is Hindu), Trinidad and Tobago (22.5% Hindu, all of which are of Indian descent) are also places where Hindus face constant intimidation and discrimination and attacks against them and their temples. Or Saudia Arabia, which deliberately outlaws any display of non-Islamic religion.

Even in modern India the Muslim aggressors and their successors who are against the country have not even stopped trying to finish the job they started centuries ago. To this day, militant Islam sees India as "unfinished business" and it remains high on the agenda of oil-rich Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, which are spending millions of dollars every year trying to convert Hindus to Islam or support Islamic groups.

For this reason, Dr Suseelan, Subramanian Swamy, and others have said that Hindus and Hinduism are under siege in India. At present the Muslim population in India is expanding by leaps and bounds. There are 162 million Muslims living in Pakistan. There are approximately 150 to 160 million Muslims in India. Muslims have grown from 10% of the population to as much as 13.2% in 2001. Bangladesh has another 147 million Muslims. Roughly one-third of the world Muslim population lives in the Indian sub-continent. This is a very frightening scenario for India.

Returning to the Indian context, since 1989 more than 13,500 civilians and 5300 security personnel have been killed by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. By contrast, over the same period, till December 2004, just 62 persons have been indicted for terrorism in the State. Our Courts of Law do not and will not deliver any changes in this regard. When someone at the greatest risk to his life acts to save the country or its tradition, a shriek is sent up of Human Rights Violations, while religious fanatics and militants steamroll their way toward their own agenda at the cost of the lives and property of the Hindu majority.

During the last 20 years about 64,000 have been killed in terrorist related violence within the territory of India. By the end of 2004, 220 districts, covering 40 to 45 per cent of the country's territory, had

come to be affected by insurgencies of one kind or another. K.P.S. Gill, the famous police official, has given three reasons for these killings: 1) Islamic fundamentalism; 2) Left wing extremism; and 3) Ethnic Fundamentalists in the North East. Arun Shourie has also rightly observed that it is more or less taboo to talk about the first. The second is explained away in fashionable or elitist circles as the counter to State-terrorism as a direct consequence of Land Reforms not having been implemented. The third is lauded as "The rise of consciousness among indigenous people."

The real point is that India has a weak government, a weaker economy, and inadequate leaders at the highest levels of governance with contempt for their own nation and her people. Is this a sign of India's tolerant culture? Is it a sign of India's being a democracy? Or is it a sign of our being confused, not knowing what to do, or a deliberate intention to jeopardize the future of India? If that is the case, then subtle terrorism to misdirect the potency of India and its future exists within its own top ranks. The only thing that can correct this is a spread of the awareness of this problem and a grassroots effort to defend Dharma, ways of which we will continue to discuss in later chapters.

RIDICULOUS FOREIGN POLICY

Time and time again India's leaders do not stand up strongly enough to defend her. On account of ridiculous foreign policy, the leaders do not defend her people, her land, her culture, or traditions. We can see this from the very start of India's nationhood with Nehru. He trusted China as indicated by his slogan "Hindi chini bhai-bhai," India and China are brothers. But China fiercely attacked India in 1962, pushing back the Indian military and taking up 20,000 kilometers of Arunachal Pradesh, which they still occupy today. So much for trusting China, even though India and China are again deepening their relations.

Furthermore, India showed grace to the Dalai Lama when he fled his country of Tibet and was allowed asylum in India. China was, of course, hardly pleased about that. However, Nehru forbid any political activity of the Dalai Lama in India in order not to offend the Chinese any further. He and all prime ministers thereafter also never helped the Tibetans reclaim their country. And what did the Chinese do? They not only stayed in Arunachal Pradesh, but they have now taken Tibet as the perfect place for setting up nuclear missiles that are pointed at North Indian cities. You can see photographs of these and their positions on the

internet. The Chinese, with their occupation of Tibet, have killed 1.2 million Tibetan people, and have practically wiped out a 2000 year old tradition. When such has been their past, is it clear what their intentions with India may be?

Of course, we could also relate India's past with Kashmir. Kashmir is legally a part of India. Of that, there is no question. And in my June, 2007 trip into Kashmir, I found that the vast majority of Kashmiris would prefer to stay connected with India, as opposed to being part of Pakistan or be an independent country. However, India is still fighting to retain what has been hers for over 5000 years, and meanwhile thousands of Hindu Kashmiri pundits have been killed or forced to flee Kashmir and become refugees in their own country, living in the squalors of camps. This should have been defended and prevented years ago. But the timidity of Indian leaders shows that the welfare of the Indian people, country, land, culture, and tradition is not as important as other things. Thus, their neglect is but another crime against India.

INDIA'S POLITICIANS

There once was a Vedic Kshatriya-based monarchy that ruled Bharata Varsha. Vedic principles were the foundation for the direction of the government. Now we see numerous politicians who are swayed toward corruption, who have less than Vedic principles they follow, who are often elected by crooked politics and ridiculous promises they never keep, and who know little about how to conduct themselves in the duties that are expected of them. There are numerous stories of how such politicians misuse their authority for any damn reason that seems right for them or a colleague, or for ulterior purposes. And this only paves the way for others to engage in more crimes against India. One among many may, indeed, be educated, sincere, strong, and worthy of office, capable of discerning what really needs to be done for working for the benefit of the people. Such proper politicians stand out like a moon in the darkness because they are so rare and so needed. One thing that can be said is that there is no limit to the good things that a competent politician can do in India because there is so much that needs to be done.

Therefore, crooked politicians in India are only another crime against itself. It is imperative that people learn how to vote for the appropriate politicians so that India can continue to move forward. Obviously, there is much progress that has been made in India, especially since it has achieved independence, but there is still much work that

needs to be done, a few things of which we have discussed in this book. If people can take it upon themselves to be careful about who they vote in as elected officials, many of the problems that need to be addressed, and many that have arisen because of bad politicians, would be greatly reduced.

BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION

The British were the masters at centralizing everything to control India from the top down. After all, that was their purpose, to control and plunder the country to gain whatever riches were available from it. Thus, the corruption was not covert since they were there with corrupt motives from the start. It was obvious, and they did not care who said what about it. Everyone was under them. But Nehru followed the same pattern of bureaucracy of the British, which never should have happened.

So now you have a politician who earns a few thousand rupees a month, but has an enormous amount of power in the decisions he makes, which means he is in the position to leverage himself into making lots of money by fixing deals with those who want his approval for things they want. This starts from the top down. Thus, the politicians have little reason to be honest, if they want to earn much more than a few thousand rupees a month. And this tendency goes right down to even the small civil workers. They become insensitive, callous, and unconcerned with the welfare of the general masses, and think of what they can do for themselves with their own position.

For example, the highway department of Uttar Pradesh is known for being extremely inefficient. It has one employee for every 1.25 miles of road, and they are paid higher than most road workers in India. Yet, Uttar Pradesh has some of the worst highways in India. The roads have so many potholes that numerous farmers cannot get their produce to market. This is a crime because more than a third of India's fruits and vegetables rot before reaching the market, as if they have so much food to throw away, especially in regard to how many people that are poverty stricken and hungry in India. One problem with this is that many highway employees in Uttar Pradesh can decide not to go to work since they cannot be fired or let go. And they do not care what happens to the farmers and the produce that India desperately needs. In fact, the government spends so much money on salaries for their numerous road workers, they hardly have enough money for tools, steamrollers, and blacktop for pavement. So the critical need for a better and expanding

infrastructure in India is unattainable with the present system in place. And the lack of an improved infrastructure is one of the main reasons why there are not more foreign investments and companies willing to establish production plants in India. So, better roads would also make more jobs, a better economy, and more investment from foreign companies, and a way to save the food before it rots to dust, which also means alleviating poverty for thousands, if they would only do it.

There are innumerable examples of this that take place on a daily basis. But I will describe another such incident. This was told to me by a personal friend who happened to be sharing stories with a fellow passenger on a train. It turned out that he was talking to a government inspector, who told of this incident. The military personnel had been complaining for a long time of illnesses in the ranks, such as liver and kidney diseases. It was happening at an alarming rate in certain vicinities. So they began to investigate and eventually traced the problem to the cooking oil that the military was purchasing, which was used on all military bases to cook food for the troops. They traced it back further to one plant where the cooking oil was made. Finally, the government inspector was called to inspect the facility at this manufacturing plant.

When the inspector arrived, after looking over the place, he could see that the manager of the plant was adding foul substances, equal to used car oil into the cooking oil to expand the quantity. The oils mixed well, and, thus, he would not have to manufacture as much as he needed, but could sell far more than he had made. This cooking oil that was mixed with junk oil was being distributed throughout the military bases and causing so much harm and disease amongst the ranks.

So the inspector went to the plant manager and notified him of this finding, for which the plant manager would have to pay heavy fines, jail time, and lose the military contract he had. But the inspector asked the manager how much it was worth to him to get a good report for his oil, which would then state that the oil was not the problem with the rampant illnesses amongst the military. So the manager offered him a bribe of many thousands of rupees, which was a nice way to fatten the wallet of the inspector. And for that, the inspector made a report that the plant's cooking oil was fine, and that it was not the problem that caused the illnesses in the military. In this way, the inspector was paid off, the plant manager kept the contract with India's military, and the troops all over India continue to ingest the contaminated oil that caused their internal diseases. This, of course, also weakens the defense system of India that keeps the country secure. This is but an example of

bureaucratic corruption that is rampant in so much of India, and, thus, equals to another crime against itself.

THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Speaking further of the corruption found in India, which needs to be overcome, many of the judges in India's legal system are also dishonest. Many in the big cities, such as Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, etc., are agreeable to "doing deals." That means that for the right price they will fix the cases in the favor of the person who offers them the right amount of cash. So, in such a situation, there is no justice for anyone who has no money. And the next problem in this matter is that many of the judges are fixed in their position. For example, it takes a two-thirds majority vote of parliament to remove a judge from the Supreme Court.

Besides the need to have money for bought justice in numerous courts, in even the honest courts there is a great delay in the speed of which suits go to court. The backlog is said to be equal to 300 years of work at the current rate to catch up. The problem for everyone, therefore, is that delayed justice often means no justice. People can and do die before their case goes to court, whether for criminal or civil cases. Some murder trails have taken as long as 15 years to go to court. This becomes extremely inefficient since witnesses may die or may no longer remember important details by the time the case goes to trail. That is also why few criminals are convicted. The slow process in the legal system was there during the days of the British, even before then, but they persist in modern times as well. Thus, it is another crime against India by India itself.

THE THREAT OF PAKISTAN

Today there is still the threat of Pakistan, militarily and socially. Muslims in Pakistan still call out for the "Dur-ul-Islam," the house of Islam for all Muslims to join. And with this, there can be found many Muslims in India who have a greater patriotic attachment toward Pakistan than India. They reason this way since they view India, after all, as still the home of the "infidels." And in many madrasas or Islamic schools across India there is still a call for Muslims to avoid the Hindu infidels. Some even cry out for the recapture of India by Muslims, which

they consider to rightfully belong to them from before the arrival of the British. So this is an ongoing threat.

This has been especially relevant in Kashmir, where if the Islamic wish had been fully realized, the Hindus would have been completely wiped out, and Kashmir would be theirs, fully Islamic. However, before the invading Muslims entered Kashmir and began to convert the people to Islam years ago, the majority were all Hindus or Buddhists, which is a fact that is presently and conveniently forgotten. Now Muslims whose families had been Hindus a few generations ago are ready to cry for the supremacy of Islam. At the beginning of the 20th century, Kashmir still was 25% Hindu before 350,000 Kashmiri pundits were driven out into refugee camps in India.

Pakistan was created to appease the desire of Muslims for their own country, allowing for a place where Muslims could go instead of staying a minority in India. Thus, all those who do not like India can still go to Pakistan. Yet, the creation of Pakistan has not solved the problem, and it has been an ever present enemy to India since its creation. Pakistan has remained a most unstable country, known to shelter many extremist groups. And being next door to India, it certainly remains a threat to the stability of the region.

KASHMIR

In dividing the Punjab from India, Jinnah, a month before becoming the governor-general of the new state of Pakistan, announced on July 11, 1947: “I have already made it clear more than once that the Indian States are free to join either the Pakistan Constituent Assembly or the Hindustan Constituent Assembly or remain independent. . . We have made it clear that we are not going to coerce, intimidate, or put any pressure on any State regarding its choice.”

It was that promise upon which Pakistan recognized the independence of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the legality of its ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh. Thus, the Maharaja signed a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan on August 12, 1947, which was countersigned by Pakistan on August 16. Further adjustments according to the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir were not legally necessary. It needed only the signature of Maharaja Hari Singh for it to be legally valid.

However, Jinnah did not honor his promise to not coerce Kashmir. He and his doctor knew he no longer had much time left to live, so he wanted to force Kashmir to join Pakistan. He arranged a

military operation that was attempted to be disguised as tribal raids into Kashmir. It was on October 23, 1947 in which Pakistani jeeps loaded some 5,000 armed Pathan, Afridi, Waziri, and Mahsud tribals, and crossed the Kashmiri border and headed east toward Srinagar. Although Pakistan noted this as a purely volunteer action by irate tribals who were coming to the aid of their oppressed Muslim brothers, the trucks and equipment were not of tribal origination. Both Pakistani officials and British officers watched and supported that Pakistani operation.

The Maharaja of Kashmir wrote to Attlee that under obvious Pakistani authority his border was being invaded. The invaders had captured several towns, slaughtered large numbers of civilians, and were only about fifty miles from Srinagar. On October 26, the Maharaja requested military assistance from India. It was also on that day he signed the Instrument of Accession into India. Thus, he was able to receive assistance from India.

In accepting the accession, Lord Mountbatten wrote that it was accepted, but was later to be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people, once things had settled down and the invaders had left the state. Unfortunately, the invaders never did completely leave the state. Nonetheless, the Instrument of Accession was the standard document as stipulated in the Government of India Act of 1935 as amended and in force on August 15, 1947. Therefore, all it would take for that state to join India was the acceptance of the Governor-General whereby the ruler of the state declares that he accedes to the Dominion. Nothing more would be required. Thus, with the acceptance of this Instrument of Accession by Lord Mountbatten as signed by the Maharaja of Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir was now a part of India as in accord with the Partition Agreements. In this way, Kashmir was now under the authority of India and not merely by the power of its Maharaja. This was also in accord with the original statement of Jinnah in that any state would be given free choice to join either Pakistan or India. In this way, now that Kashmir was a part of India, it was the responsibility of India to defend it. This was also recognized by the United Nations on January 1, 1948.

It is interesting to note that the legal responsibility for India to defend Kashmir was also accepted by the United States through Warren Austin, its representative to the United Nations, on February 4, 1948.

India also called on Article 35 of the UN Charter and reported that Pakistan had invaded Kashmir. The invaders were allowed transit across Pakistan, and their operations were based in Pakistan, and were Pakistani nationals being trained and equipped by Pakistan. Therefore, the Pakistani government should be prevented from participating or

assisting in the invasion of Kashmir. India also indicated to the UN council that if Pakistan did not end the raid, India would reserve the freedom to take at any time it deemed necessary for the military action it needed to respond to the situation. A long diplomatic battle followed with various arguments from Pakistan, denying obvious participation in the attacks, and counter arguments from India. This has gone on ever since.

It has become obvious that Pakistan shelters many terrorists that often work for the very interests of Pakistan. Thus, Pakistan is not dependable in extracting their loyalists from Kashmir, or anywhere else for that matter. That is why there has been and still is the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir where they refuse to give up what they have occupied for so long.

However, in 1989, Muslims of Kashmir started to kill the Kashmiri pundits, the Hindus, threatening them to leave Kashmir or else. Thereafter, the campaign started to become increasingly intense to rid Kashmir of all Hindus.

In 1990, under the rule and the rhetoric of Pakistan's ruler, Benazir Bhutto, who said she wanted Kashmir to become part of Pakistan, there were the orchestrated and bolstered attacks by Muslims against all Kashmiri Hindus. Full page advertisements were published in newspapers telling Hindus to leave or die. They could either convert to Islam or leave the state, or face the consequences. Big demonstrations were held by Muslims at their mosques, and the killing and terror against Hindus increased. Men were beaten and killed, even women were taken, raped and hanged from trees, or even burned alive. Their bodies often dumped in the Jhelum River. Others were branded by fire. Many had to run for their lives under the abuse of the Muslims. Practically, it was a reenactment of the same atrocities committed by the Muslim invaders years earlier.

As Francois Gautier explains it when he was covering the area of Kashmir in the late seventies, and even as I had been told by the Muslims I had met in my travels through Kashmir, Kashmir used to be a place where Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs all got along, each observing the holidays or even marriages of the other. But later the hardline Sunnis came from Pakistan and Afghanistan, and then cinemas were banned, the burqua was imposed again, even the last Sufi shrine was burnt to the ground, and over the next 20 years 400,000 Kashmiri pundits were chased out of Kashmir by violence. Thus, they were forced to become refugees in their own country, having been driven out of their homeland, with little facility for a decent existence like sanitation,

medicine, housing, etc. Many have died of disease or exposure to the elements. As many as 60,000 people were killed, and 750,000 rendered homeless, with 600 villages renamed with Islamic names. In spite of the protests by the Kashmiri pundits, the world looked the other way and remained silent. India's government did next to nothing. Even human rights activists remained silent. It was another holocaust in India against the Hindus with no help from anyone.

The process of desecration, looting, vandalizing, and destruction of temples has continued in Jammu & Kashmir under the Islamic anti-Hindu rule through generations, with the intent to wipe out all traces of religious and cultural symbols of Hindus. These targets, besides the temples, included libraries, schools, universities, and ashramas.

After the country became free and Kashmir acceded to the Union of India in 1947, the destruction and desecration of temples under the new Islamic regimes wearing secular turbans received added impetus and acceleration. Especially after 1986, law and order in the valley deteriorated and temple destruction became the order of the day. Numerous Hindu temples have been damaged or destroyed since 1990. As many as 1500 Hindu temples have been razed to the ground.

The terrorism in Kashmir has not been based on what some people call a freedom struggle, since many Kashmiri Muslims do not want to leave India, though they want Indian military out of their lives. But the terrorism has been based on the extermination of the Hindus.

As Kashmir is now, the people there are forced to accept whatever the situation provides. Though many do not like how the Kashmiri government has done things, from my travel in Kashmir in 2007, it appears that most Kashmiri Muslims want to stay with India. They do not want to go to Pakistan.

I met numerous Kashmiris while visiting the region, and one family I talked with actually reminisced about staying in their neighborhood when people of all religions and cultures lived there, and they all lived together peacefully. Even now there were still Muslims, primarily Sunnis with about 25% Shiites in Srinagar, along with Christians who celebrate Christmas, and Sikhs who also celebrate their own holidays, all in the same neighborhood. And they also share such festivities with those of other faiths. The Muslims I talked to said that they did not mind it like that at all. It is not like all Muslims wanted all non-Muslims out of the area.

One of my main contacts, Mr. Abdulla, who works in the tourist trade, said that it never mattered what a person was years ago. They all got along and worked together. But when the terrorism started, it affected

everyone and stirred up tension between them. He also said that to add to the confusion, some of the tourist companies from other areas of India would hire people to create disturbances in Srinagar to scare people away from coming to Kashmir, thus increasing business in other tourist spots in India. I am not sure if he had hard evidence of this, or if this was only his theory. But many times after various terrorist activities took place, whoever did it would not identify themselves as being responsible, so they were not always sure of who did what. And the press was always quick to make headlines of any such trouble, which further scared people from coming to Srinagar. However, this decrease in the tourist trade, which many Kashmiris in Srinagar depend on, is exactly what the militants want.

One of the business owners I spoke to at length said that he had lived in the area of the Moghul gardens years ago, which was an area where the militant Muslims would sometimes come down out of the hills and knock on the door of anyone they chose and demand food, water, and money. When you have guns pointed at you, there is little else you can do. Or they would even separate the men and women and then rape the women. And this was to other Muslims. The militants would especially target those who had money, such as going to the wealthy homes, like doctors. But such people soon left Srinagar for other places. He said that many terrorists came in from Afghanistan and were paid by Pakistan to cause trouble in the area. Many still are, but now focus on rural regions outside and far from Srinagar where it is easier to get away with their dirty work. Thus, even the residents of Kashmir know that Pakistan is still the home or shelter of numerous terrorists that reside there, or assist them in creating trouble in places like Kashmir in hopes of assimilating that area into Pakistan.

At that time, no one could speak out against the Islamic militants. You could not say anything to even your wife or children because if word got out in any manner that you were against the interest of the militants, you might be the one killed or missing the next day. You had to tolerate what was happening or die. You had to watch in silence what occurred to other Muslims, and especially what happened to the Hindus of the area, as well as the Sikhs and any other non-Muslims, many of whom were terrorized, mistreated, tortured in terrible ways, and killed. Thus, fear tactics for ethnic cleansing of the area of all non-Muslims has been going on for many years, but had recently intensified in the 1990s.

As many as 150,000 Kashmiris have been killed or disappeared during the 1992 to 1996 years because of the insurgent terrorists and

Muslim fanatics. However, more than 400,000 Kashmiri pundits have been driven out of Kashmir and into India, who are now living as refugees in squalid camps, due to ethnic cleansing by the Muslims.

Actually, the terrorism has drastically reduced from what it was and Srinagar is much safer than it used to be. These days any terrorist attacks are generally directed toward the police or military. But that does not mean that civilians do not get in the way of such attacks and are also killed. If a tour bus is going by an attack on a police vehicle, then too bad for whoever is there. This no longer happens often, but it is still a chance you have to take. Any Kashmir newspaper or website will let you know. And it can change at any time. A peaceful Srinagar can become a violent valley at any time for any reason. This is what happened in the summer of 2008 when there were mass demonstrations in and around Srinagar by Muslims who were burning the Indian national flag and were against the Hindus acquiring some land in Kashmir near the Amarnath Cave to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims who go there every year. This seems especially odd in that it is obvious that Muslims want as much of India as they can get, but they are quick to react violently against any notion of returning the favor.

Nonetheless, many Indian tourists are returning to Srinagar for vacations and holidays, but you still do not see many tourists from outside India. You may see a few young foreigners or hippie-type travelers who think nothing of braving the area. But foreigners still have to be cautious if going into the old part of town where the locals sometimes still throw stones or make derogatory remarks toward Westerners. So the shop keepers of the main area of Srinagar never advise their customers to go into the old section of town, at least not without an escort, even though some foreigners still go. They obviously are not aware of the potential danger, though this should also decrease with time, possibly.

One of the reasons for the reduction in terrorism is the great military presence of the Indian Army. Sometimes it seems like it is too much, with a soldier every 50 feet along the roads, or even truckloads of soldiers at particular intersections that stop traffic or check the identification cards of the local people. But more than that is the change of policy in dealing with terrorists. First, it was to capture the terrorists and then put them in jail. But they found that after spending five years in prison and being released, the militant fanatics would go back to their old ways of terrorism and violence. Then the army seemed to change the strategy so that if they found any terrorists, rather than taking prisoners, they fought to the death. Thus, the number of militants gradually began

to decline, and they started to back away from situations in which they could be killed by the army.

The business owner that I talked to also said that this is what is necessary, that the militant Muslims must be killed so that Srinagar could go back to being a peaceful place. I have to admit that this was the first time that I ever heard one Muslim recommending the death of another Muslim for any reason whatsoever. But he was adamant about it. I could see that he had experienced too much fear and trouble from the militant Muslims himself to have any pity for them. Besides, ruining the tourist trade upsets the livelihood of so many other Kashmiris who have nothing else upon which to earn a living. That is their main business, and many of them have been waiting for peace, freedom from the militant Muslims, so they can again earn a decent living.

One thing to realize is that Kashmir does not really have particular products that they produce for their economic development. Most of what they depend on is tourism, and selling their crafts to tourists who visit, or shipping such items for others to sell in places outside of Kashmir. So when the militant Muslims entered the area, it damaged and hurt everyone's life because the tourism trade was drastically reduced. For several years, no one came to Srinagar. Plus, the militants not only intimidated the Hindus or the Kashmiri pundits to leave the area, or kill them and take possession of their property, the militants also burnt down places that were well known tourist spots. These included nice restaurants, hotels, or roads leading to known locations. Even the main tourist office was burnt down a few years ago. So when I went looking for it to get certain types of information, as listed in a recently published guide book I had, all that was in its place was a barren lot. Nor have many of these places been rebuilt or repaired yet. This will still take more time and more confidence in the situation there.

As it stands now, about 85% of all resident Kashmiris want to stay with India and do not support the idea of the militants to separate from India. In fact, many never did, but for years they could not say anything. Only in the last few years have they felt secure enough to be able to start speaking out and expressing how they really feel, and participate in elections. Only about 10% of Kashmiris want to be independent, and 5% want to be with Pakistan. Those who do not want to stay with India also do not want to have elections. They do not want the means for the general Kashmiri populace to be able to express their preferences.

However, the area of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) has little facility, and the people have hardly enough to eat there. Pakistan

does not have the means to really take care of their area of Kashmir, so many of the people there are very poor. So, as the shop keeper asked, why would anyone want to stay with Pakistan? While in the Indian area of Kashmir, people have more freedom and opportunity to develop their businesses and enjoy life, at least as much as the situation allows. Plus, India supplies the people with many of the facilities they need. Only those with a criminal mentality want to stay with Pakistan, because they get paid from their Pakistan connections to pose in that way. Yet, if you look at them, this is the only way by which they have the money to live in nice houses and send their children to college in England, or even the United States. They prepare them to leave Kashmir, not to remain there or stay with Pakistan. So, the business owner felt that India has done so much for the Kashmiri people. Why change that?

However, all the Muslims that I talked to in Kashmir felt angry at Bush for attacking Iraq and, thus, putting American citizens at unnecessary risk while they travel in foreign countries. This was the big thing, not the invasion itself, but that there had been so much dislike developed toward Americans because of what Bush did. Yet, they all loved Bill Clinton and talked nicely about him, but felt that Bush was just stupid.

Most of the Muslims I talked to very much appreciated the American people. In fact, the business owner almost desperately wanted me to convey the message that he loved Americans. He felt they were God's gift to the region since they are important to their survival in their participation in tourism. He pointed out clearly that not all Muslims feel like the militants but do indeed want to get along with all others and Americans especially. Indians are coming back to Srinagar, but they do not purchase much of the handicrafts like carpets, shawls, etc. So Kashmir is still dependent on foreigners for their livelihoods. If the peace continues, then as the Indians have returned to Kashmir, in time more foreigners will also begin to return to Srinagar. But that may still take a ways to go.

There was a time before 1989 when tourism was really high. You would not be able to find a houseboat or hotel room for weeks in the tourist season, which is the three to four months of the summer. But for years now that has not been the case. Only recently are things getting busier and numerous people are again crowding the area, renting houseboats on Dal Lake, or the quieter lakes, and occupying the hotels. Due to the terrorism of the militants they have all suffered so much, and also because of crooked politicians who want Kashmir for their own agenda. But now things are getting better.

I do not know what this may mean for the thousands of Hindu Kashmiri pundits that have been forced out of Kashmir and are now living as refugees in India. Whether they will be able to return, or if they even want to, remains to be seen. Muslim leaders in the area still tell Hindus not to return to Kashmir. They may not have much to return to even if they did come back to see what was left of their property. That part of this episode has been a sad state of affairs, and I feel that India did not do enough to defend the people of that area, especially the Hindu Kashmiri pundits, from the terrorism of the militant Muslims when they could have done so. This neglect is another of India's crimes against itself, or its own people.

Even though most Kashmiris say that the military presence of the Indian Army is too much, and sometimes it seems that they harass more than protect, still it may be a necessity to make sure that terrorism does not raise its ugly head again in the region. Or until an ultimatum is given regarding Pakistan so that it is no longer an easy shelter for terrorists. Most everyone knows this, but it is still treated favorably by the U.S. and a few other countries. This should not remain so, at least not until things change in a more positive manner and when the terrorists are really routed out of Pakistan. But even many of the government officials of Pakistan are questionable characters.

Each time when I left the people with whom I was conducting these conversations and interviews, they always asked that I return to Srinagar, and that I also carry this message to the Western world. They were touched by my interest and my involvement in the issues of Kashmir, unlike many tourists who go there. I certainly hope that things will continue to improve there for the benefit of everyone.

In this way, it was obvious that the battle in Kashmir is often not with the Kashmiri people themselves, but with the insurgents and militant Muslims that have come in from Afghanistan and Pakistan that are fighting because they want to take Kashmir from India. This will never stop until Pakistan is put in its place.

Nonetheless, I had talked to one Hindu man when I was in Haridwar who came from Srinagar. He said that it was the greatest place in the world, a heaven on earth. But because of what he had been subjected to by the Muslims of the area, he had to take his family and leave his property and belongings to escape the area. And the final point he made about it was that because of the way he had been treated by the local Muslims, he would never go back. This seems to be but one example of how fanatic Muslims can intimidate and threaten others who are non-Muslim.

MUSLIM TACTICS IN OTHER AREAS

Unfortunately, those who are extremist and uncompromising Muslims use many of the same methods used in Kashmir to convert, manipulate, intimidate, or expel Hindus in other parts of India. Such hardline Muslims have often displayed violent reactions over any offense, and then take it out on the Hindus in whatever area seems to be affected.

The fact remains that I have met many nice and hospitable Muslims while I was in Kashmir and other parts of India, those who get along with Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and even Americans. So, not all Muslims exhibit such a lack of cooperation or hatred toward non-Muslims. But the few fanatics can make a mess of things for everyone, just as the militants have caused misery for their own people in Kashmir. Of course, there are fanatics in every religion, and I'm not sure what will change that, except a higher application of the true universal spiritual principles and truths, which is what must be emphasized in any religion.

Nonetheless, as we have seen from history and in Kashmir, extremist Muslims use violence, terrorism, and coercion on a regular basis to try and get their way. Hindus have been oppressed, subjugated, forcefully converted, and terrorized by Muslims for centuries, like the recent five cowardly bomb blasts in Delhi (September 30, 2008) that indiscriminately killed 30 and injured over 100 in various market places. The Muslim group called the Indian Mujahideen took responsibility for the blasts, as they did a short time previous to this for the bomb blasts in Jaipur and Bangalore. Many other such events have been documented in publications, books, or websites, so I do not think it is necessary to do the same here. Anyone can learn more about this.

One point is that only in India have Muslims been accorded special privileges and more rights than the majority Hindus, as outlined in the Indian Constitution. What other country does that? But still, whenever there appears to be a problem in the Muslim community, riots have ensued in which Hindus become the main target wherein beatings take place, Hindu homes and shops are burned and destroyed, Hindu girls raped, and the people are maimed or murdered. And in the name of tolerance, Hindus are supposed to allow themselves to be subjected to this without raising a hand? Yet, if Hindus defend themselves, the media comes out to speak of the tirades and attacks of the "fanatical Hindus." And we are supposed to think this is balanced? How is this fair? The Hindu majority, if they really wanted to, could impose serious reactions

on the Muslims at any time. And in most cases they have not done so, other than incidents like the Gujarat riots, which was triggered by the way Muslims killed Hindu men, women, and children by burning them alive on the Sabarmati Express train car S-6 on February 27, 2002 at Godhra that was returning from the holy town of Ayodhya. I am only surprised such incidents have not happened more often when we consider how much the Hindus have already tolerated from Muslims. But would it not be great if such occurrences never happened, and that people would not provoke each other in such a way?

Actually, why should the Hindus not get angry about having to live in such a situation, in a country that has shown constitutional favors towards those who are so quick to become hostile, and those who have a history of loathing the Vedic traditions and anyone who participates in them? If certain Muslims hate being in India so much, or the extra privileges they have enjoyed under the Indian Constitution, then why not go to Pakistan? That is why Pakistan and Bangladesh were created. Let India live in peace and take the Islamic terrorism and militant groups someplace else. Or is it that they still want to capture India and make all of it into another Islamic country?

CHINA IN TIBET

China and India are enjoying some better relations in this day, but that was not always the case. They were held in high confidence by Nehru when China invaded northeast India and have held onto some of Arunachal Pradesh ever since. And now, China has been occupying Tibet, right next to India, with no intention of ever letting it go. Since the time when China first invaded Tibet, 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed through torture, shootings, concentration camps, etc. Plus, 6254 monasteries, and 60% of all religious and cultural archives have been destroyed. Even now about 10% of all resident Tibetans are in prisons, and 250 million Chinese troops are occupying Tibet. The Chinese settlers outnumber the Tibetans two to one. However, these statistics may have gotten much worse since they had been provided by Resolution Number 63, adopted by the United States Congress in 1989.

One of the most strategic reasons for the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese is that it is very important for their military purposes. It sits on a plateau next to India and over Russia. It is reported that China has transferred over one-third of its nuclear arsenal to Nagchuka, 250 kms away from Lhassa. This region is also known for having huge caves,

which the Chinese have now connected with numerous tunnels. From there, China has missiles pointed at India's important northern cities. So, in regard to China's past, and the fact that China has never forgiven India for the hospitality it has shown toward the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugees, it is not clear how much trust you could ever have for China.

India's border with China is still an ongoing dispute that has not been resolved for over 50 years. Beijing still claims 90,000 sq km of Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh and occupies 38,000 sq km more in Ladakh (Aksai Chin). If China was really so interested in maintaining peace with India, why can they not honor the original border between the two countries instead of hanging on to the property that had always been a part of India? Or does China simply want to use it as a pressure tactic for India to give up what belongs to them? In that case it would appear that China does not offer India the
same respect that it wants from India. Thus, this relationship may be something that will always be a situation wherein India will have to tread carefully.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Besides these challenges that India must face, which include both outside influences and internal issues, there are also plenty of social problems that India has to deal with. Some of these are points that India must correct if it is to proceed as a country that can take care of itself, and which will help others view it as a truly progressive nation. Such problems must be solved if India is to protect the future of its people and the culture that appeared from within its regions. The issues I discuss herein are simply those that are some of the most obvious, and which I am mentioning because of the need to do something about them for the betterment of India's future. Though let us remember that there is not one country in the world that does not have plenty of problems, and India does seem to be resolving many of these issues that were once far greater obstacles than they are today.

CLEANLINESS OF INDIA

There are numerous problems and social issues that are caused simply by the general mass consciousness of the Indians themselves. And many of these will come back to haunt India and its future if

something does not change in the way Indians themselves view each other and their own country.

One case in point is the general attitude toward cleanliness and the environment in India. An example of this is that while traveling, a friend of mine needed to find a toilet. He asked a man at the bus stop where the toilet was. The man responded, "Why look for a toilet when all of India is a toilet." Now what kind of attitude is that? Things are not going to get better if people have this outlook. The cleanliness of India can only be improved if the people of India begin to have a better approach toward their own country and start doing their part for the cleanliness of their own cities, towns, neighborhoods, and streets.

Cleanliness affects so many other areas. Right now the Ganga and the Yamuna Rivers are practically the most sacred but also the most polluted rivers in the country. Is this not the perfect paradox? The Ganga and Yamuna Rivers, where so many rites for spiritual purity take place, and where innumerable people come to take their holy bath in the sacred waters, yet parts of these rivers can no longer even support life within? Yet, we can see that the people, even the Hindus, allow for sewage and factory waste to be poured into the sacred waters, as if the spiritual purity could always overcome any amount of material contamination.

The facts are that **Delhi alone contributes around 3,296 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage** by virtue of drains into the Yamuna. This is more than all the Class two cities of India put together. Ten to fifteen years ago, a large quantity of Delhi's sewage was used for irrigating agricultural lands. Today agricultural lands have been converted into residential colonies, so drainage of waste water is difficult in the capital. Pollution levels more than doubled from 1993 to 2005. And they continue to rise.

Other rivers in India are also very polluted. But with the population of Delhi increasing from 0.4 million in 1911 to 9.4 million in 1991, and with a population of 13.9 million in 2001**,** there is ever-increasing pressure on the water resources. And few officials are coming up with any serious answers to this problem

Another concern for the cleanliness of India is that almost a million infants die of diarrhea every year. The biggest killer of children under ten years of age is simply waterborne diseases. This is not the most difficult to cure, but it is a matter of cleanliness in the environment. This is not a question of a lack of funds, intellectuals, plan-makers, or ability. If anything, it is because of simple mismanagement, unconcern, and a lack of training. It is this which causes the failure to supply even the most basic facilities for India's poor. And this includes public toilets for

urban slums, or even proper books and chalk for its village school teachers and students, and clean syringes and medicine for the health clinics, which are not all that expensive. This also contributes to the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic that India is facing. India spends less on its health care than most developing countries. You cannot say this is a sign of true development if this should continue. Other arrangements have to be made, but like with all of India's problems, it is mostly a matter of changing its priorities.

We have also seen the news articles on how a sizable portion (as much as 47%) of India's children under five years old remain malnourished. This is a failing of its food subsidies and its distribution among the poverty stricken. This primarily affects girls. This is a major problem because not only are malnourished children often stunted both mentally and physically the rest of their lives, but the women usually pass along their deficiencies to their children. Thus, each generation can get progressively more problematic, and the country looses in both the contributions that such children could otherwise have made to the country, as well as the funds it must or should shell out to take care of such children. After all, they grow up to be less than they could be, if only they had been supplied the proper food, facilities, and education at the start of their lives. India needs to come up to speed on this matter.

The plague of '94 in Mumbai showed how little people cared for keeping their city and neighborhoods clean. And, thus, many people became deathly sick. The upper classes did not care what happened to others. This sort of consciousness must change. You cannot have a progressive country with such a lack of concern. Thus, many tourist and industrial interests will be lost when they see the health dangers that are caused by this lack of cleanliness and general laziness for the upkeep and well-being of the country and fellow Indians in the general mass consciousness of the people.

SAVING THE GIRL CHILD

Another issue is that often it is found that the mass psychology in India is a preference for sons. It may be natural to desire a son, but it should not be at the expense and loss of its girls. And in the preference for sons, there is the increase in the method of elimination of daughters. This is done through abortions of the female fetus, or feticide, or female infanticide. The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act of 1994 was passed to try to curb these tendencies, along with efforts of the Health Ministry

and social organizations, but with limited success. Presently, however, certain advertisements showing the female fetus asking to be allowed to live have created a higher awareness of this problem. But, as typical in India, there has been little done to enforce the established laws to penalize those who break them. For example, the use of ultrasound machines still flourishes with greedy medical practitioners relenting or saying there is a demand for such services. Thus, despite the law, some Indians clearly are using ultrasound techniques to scan for female fetuses in order to abort them. Figures suggest as many as a million such fetuses could be aborted every year in India.

The real problem is already showing up in places like Gujarat where we find that for every 1000 boys there are only around 930 girls. It is unlikely that nature alone accounts for this gender skew – in Delhi, for instance, only 821 girls are born for every 1,000 boys. The overall population difference between males and females, according to estimates for July of 2008, are 591,681,864 males and 556,314,034 females: a difference of over 35 million males to females. If this rate continues, then the repercussions of this trend will also get worse, wherein it may become the case that boys will have to purchase girls for marriage, or make some other arrangement to secure a girl to wed. Maybe the Dowry system will have to change from the bride's family giving money to the groom, back to the groom securing a bride by giving money to the bride's family.

In ancient India, women enjoyed power, freedom, and influence in the family, society, and government. But a thousand years of invasions and occupations by outside forces have led to women being secluded in the home, as well as from community and family decisions, and losing influence in all areas. This was never a condition that would have been found in Vedic culture. Fortunately, women are again beginning to gain status and position and education in the new India. It is now illegal to demand a dowry for marriage, although gifts are fine. It is also illegal for a doctor or medical worker to reveal the sex of a baby from a sonogram report, although it is still done and enforcement of such laws are lax.

As women become more educated, employment is increasing amongst women more than in any other group in India. Nowadays, some girls make more money than men. This increase in the education of girls has produced various positive results, such as allowing them to have a career that contributes to the development of her family and the country, as well as having fewer children, and giving better health care to those she does have.

In any case, it is time for India to show how truly civilized it is by increasing its respect for the daughters and women it produces, and for all of them who have disappeared over the years.

This should also be reflected in the stopping of kidnapping poor village girls, or the bribing or purchasing of tribal girls by dacoits with the promise of good jobs and then taking them to places like Mumbai where they are sold and forced into prostitution. Any decent person should be completely outraged by such occurrences. Many of the young girl prostitutes in Mumbai are not there by choice, but because they were kidnapped and then beaten, starved, or tortured into submission. This goes on not only for the profit, but because of the corruption in the local governments and police departments that allow it to continue. There is no reason why the government and police cannot stop this if they really wanted. There are laws against this but few implement them. They could easily close the houses of prostitution overnight and free these girls, except for the bribes and the corruption that makes the police look the other way, and allows the Indian mafia to take advantage of these young girls.

This ruins the lives of many young girls and their families, helps spread HIV/AIDS throughout India, and is another point for which India receives much criticism, while the international community watches. Therefore, heavy punishment should be administered to anyone for such kidnapping or bribery, and the madams who run the houses of prostitution should be sent to long terms of prison. All politicians or police commissioners who do not carry out the laws to stop this, or who accept bribes to look the other way, should also be relieved of their position or jailed for long periods of time for allowing the ruination of the lives of so many girls. This would have immediate effects. Otherwise, it is again another of India's crimes against itself.

DOWRY

The concept of dowry should also be abolished, not merely by the laws that have been established, but by enforcement with stiff fines when it is found to have taken place. Dowry was prohibited by law in 1961 through the Dowry Prohibition Act. And the Dowry Prohibition Rules were established in 1985 wherein all presents between the bride and bridegroom must be listed under certain rules and conditions. The penalty for demanding dowry by any person is imprisonment for a term

which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to two years, and with fines which may extend to 10,000 rupees.

Dowry was originally a way of helping the newly married couple get off to a good start financially, and especially to help protect the bride if something should happen to the husband. Thus, she would have something to fall back on for her subsistence if she was alone. In the Vedic times, the husband had to qualify for marrying a bride, especially amongst the Kshatriya warriors and kings. Also, the bride's family would provide the bride with a dowry of gold, jewels, maidservants, or whatever the family was capable of giving. This was for the security of the young newly married girl.

Somehow this custom became perverted that instead of giving money to the bride, the money and items were given to the bridegroom's family for the bride. But now it is the payment in cash or merchandise by the bride's family to the bridegroom's family along with the bride, and for securing the wedding. It has become a perverted system in which it is the bride's parents who must fork over a large dowry to the agreement of the groom and his family for the marriage. This has little to do with the bride and more in satisfying the wants and desires of the groom and his relations.

The present system of dowry, if it continues, has turned the whole marriage ritual of combining two people in a loving partnership, a sacred institution of husband and wife, into a mere business arrangement between two families. This system also helps divide the classes and puts the financial burden on the bride's family if they want to have their daughter get married. It is especially difficult when the bride's family is poor, or has a number of daughters that need to get married.

This system is another reason for the increased rate of infanticide and abortions when it is discovered that a woman is pregnant with a girl. The present-day system of dowry is now mostly a materialistic and shameful arrangement. It is a system that now also helps divide the castes and the value of the sexes. It must be stopped, not merely by laws, but by natural choice through the upliftment of consciousness in the people of India.

Though prohibited by law, the extraction of a dowry from the bride's family prior to marriage still occurs. If the dowry is not large enough, the marriage is either canceled, or the bride is often harassed, abused, and made miserable. If that does not work to help extract a higher dowry, or if the money is being given but then runs out, it can escalate to physical abuse and even what is called bride burning by the husband or family, like the mother-in-law. This is often done by pouring

kerosene on her and lighting it, usually deeply injuring her or killing her, in which case the husband can marry again. If the bride survives, she is often so injured and scarred that she becomes a nuisance to the husband or family. She often does not leave the hospital alive.

These burnings are often reported as accidental kitchen accidents, so the reporting of actual bride burnings tend to be lower than what actually happens. However, the records that are available actually show that such incidents are increasing. It is estimated that in Delhi, for example, a woman is burned to death almost every twelve hours. In 1988, dowry murders were recorded at 2,209 women, whereas in 1990, just two years later, it was listed as 4,835. That is a huge jump in just two years. Furthermore, as related in Wikipedia, the Indian national crime bureau reports that there were about 6,787 dowry death cases registered in India in 2005, which again was a significant increase over the 1995 level of 4,648. However, the increase was marginal (0.1%) over the five-year average of 2000-2004. Nonetheless, 90% of the cases of burnt women are reported as accidents, 5% as suicides, and only another 5% listed as murder. So, dowry deaths are no doubt greatly under-reported. And convictions are rare. Nonetheless, it is a huge loss of womenfolk on an annual basis. Can any civilized person justify this for any reason? It is an embarrassment to India, which remains a crime against itself

CHILD LABOR

Child labor is a global problem found everywhere, even in the United States. There is an estimated 218 million child laborers worldwide. But the worst offenders of this, according to the UN International Labor Organization, are the Asia-Pacific nations with approximately 122 million child laborers, then the sub-Saharan Africa with 49 million. Some of the worst nations include Cambodia, Mali, Burkina Faso, and then Bolivia and Guatemala. India ratified the UN convention on children's rights but did not sign one key point that would set the standard for child labor at age 14 and under. So this dilutes the effectiveness of upholding any laws for the rights of children in India.

Most child labor in India involves agriculture, and then industry. The industries that are the most likely to use underage children in labor include carpet-making, embroidered jeans, decorated boxes or purses, and the silk industry. Not only child labor is involved in these areas, but forced labor of adults can be part of it as well, especially in the area

called bonded labor. But as long as Westerners want to buy cheap goods, child labor is likely to continue.

Child labor is wanted especially in the silk industry because the small hands can handle the silk worm cocoons more easily and gently than adults. Thus, they are forced to stick their hands in boiling water to get the cocoons, which after a few years makes their hands scarred and injured for life. In the cottonseed industry, children's hands can more easily work with the stamens and pistils. Yet, their young bodies are no better at tolerating the poisons and insecticides that are sprayed on the plants at least once a week. These may include Nuvacron, which has been banned by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, and endosulfan methomyl, and metasystox, which is considered by the EPA to be highly toxic and can produce side-effects of diarrhea, nausea, breathing problems, convulsions, headaches, and depression. Thus, the health of the children and the environment are put in jeopardy because of these chemicals.

In 2007, according to Glocal Research, a consultancy in Hyderabad, 420,000 laborers under the age of 18 were employed in cottonseed farms on four states across India. Furthermore, 54% of these were under the age of 14 and illegally employed. However, according to the 2001 census, there is an estimated 12.6 million children under 14 years engaged in labor in India, and non-government organizations put that figure closer to 50 million. This is a huge illegal labor force. Thus, as India races toward a First World status in its increasing economic buildup, it is still depending on a large number of underage, and usually underprivileged and underpaid, boys and girls to help in its development.

Many of the agricultural workers put in ten-hour days in the hot sun, at 20 cents an hour, though legally they are required to be over 14 years old, in school, and with limited hours of work. There is also supposed to be no dangerous locations, nor factory work involved. Those employers who break the law can face fines or imprisonment, but who enforces the law? There are simply too few inspectors that monitor the farms in a vast area. The government needs to improve this.

In Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat, children work in the fields producing genetically modified seeds for okra, tomatoes, chilies, and eggplant at 5 to 10 cents an hour, though the minimum wage is 17 cents. And for these vegetables, pesticides are used more often.

Young laborers work for a number of reasons, mostly because their family is too poor for them to be allowed the freedom of going to school and getting an education. Or one of the parents has died or is disabled, or cannot find employment, forcing the children to work for the

money to help the family survive. Child labor is never paid much, and without an education, you can expect them to work in the lower ranks of employment most of their lives because of this.

To help change this pattern, it has been suggested that the government offer night classes for the children's education, or help increase the means for parents to find steady income so the children do not have to work. This goes hand-in-hand with the causes for homelessness, malnutrition, illiteracy, etc. It is absolutely necessary for India to find an alternative to these practices and solutions to these problems if it is expected to be viewed by the world as a truly progressive nation, and offer equality in educational, medical, and employment services for the benefit of the people.

Of course, this takes time, and we can plainly see that India is only now really starting to move forward in many areas after only a few decades of independence and freedom to develop as it can. And these are only a few areas that need attention. But as India progresses, these areas that we have mentioned cannot be neglected. And as they are adjusted, we will see India become an increasingly powerful country. Furthermore, we do not always need to wait for the government, but there are numerous non-government organizations and private citizens who can get involved in a number of ways to help remedy these problems. A grass-roots effort is often more effective anyway. We will look at some of these in the action plans we offer in the next section of this book.

BONDED LABOR.

The practice of bonded labor is another issue that should not only be outlawed with stiff fines and penalties for those who still utilize it, but such laws must be enforced. Often many people still get away with it. Bonded labor is the practice of using poor villagers for cheap labor, and often giving them low wages and shambles for dwellings. What happens is that they are given loans with interest that are supposed to be paid off in exchange for labor. The employer often sets an interest rate so high and a wage so low that the loan is hardly ever completely paid off. This keeps people bound to the employer with jobs that pay very little, and with penalties for the smallest infractions. If the loans are not paid off, that person may spend his whole life in the enslaved condition of working for the employer. Then the person's children must also work for years in order to try to pay off the loans of their fathers or grandfathers. This can go on for generations. It is essentially financial slavery. The

problem is that there are usually too few inspectors to check industries for child or bonded labor to put an end to it.

You see bonded labor in places like textile shops, large farms, and in the carpet and silk factories. It is not only time for the government to get involved to make sure that this practice comes to an end once and for all, and see to it that all financial obligations of this sort are nullified, but make sure that all who continue this practice are penalized severely enough that they refuse to engage in it. It is another example of how the rich and privileged suppress and control the lower classes. India must not think that the rest of the world does not recognize this antiquated, backward, and unfair practice. This is another system in India that is but a crime unto itself, which must be stopped if it is to be considered a truly progressive country.

THE HOMELESS

Any country in the world may have homeless people. That is a social condition that cannot always be stopped. Even the United States has a sizable homeless population. But India also has a large number of homeless people, and they are homeless not necessarily because of any fault of their own. According to the figures for the 2001 census, India has about two million homeless people. However, various non-government agencies report that the truth of the matter is greatly under-reported, and that the more accurate estimate of 2003 is around 78 million. This is a huge section of society.

The problem in India, as in many places, is that society often prefers that they remain invisible. Or society blames the homeless for their situation. Most of the homeless in India find themselves in their present situation because they have migrated from villages to urban centers in search of better employment. So it is not that they have no talent or abilities. But their attempt to find stable income has brought them to depend on uncertain employment. Once people move to the cities, they may actually find that the cost of living is higher than rural areas; there are few community or governmental support systems in place to help them; and whatever income they do have is often spent on the most minimal of necessities, such as water, toilets, and even the barest of food supplies, much of which are free or far less expensive in rural areas. Also, being homeless may be a part of a strategy to live as inexpensively as possible in order to send money home to poor families

in the village. Other beggars are old widows, persons with disabilities, or mendicants. The latter are often a part of the ancient tradition of India.

Another problem is that under Indian laws, the homeless, the beggars especially, are viewed and treated as criminals, and can be booked under various laws. And what is a beggar? The Bombay Beggary Prevention Act (1959) defines beggars as those who solicit alms, and those who sell small items at traffic lights or other public places. If caught and penalized, they can be sent to an institution, or can pay money to bail themselves out.

Those that do work often spend long hours in difficult jobs for the money just for food. Such jobs include laborers, rickshaw-wallas, or construction labor where they live in tents near their place of employment, or wherever the construction is happening. Sometimes whole families are found living at construction sites. And women may work as domestic help.

Street boys may also live in gangs where they share everything, whether it is food, clothes, money, or even intoxicants. They often look after each other, playing games, or even teaching each other the trades of the homeless, whether it is shoe polishing, garbage-picking, collecting plastic bottles, etc. If you watch them, sometimes at railway stations, often times, though homeless, they are quite clever and just need some extra guidance and education to make something of themselves.

Therefore, homelessness is a major challenge for India as a developing country that is becoming a strong global economic force. Homelessness needs to be reduced by finding ways for people to participate in this economic development. Therefore, the government should arrange more than the night shelters, which leaves much to be desired, and provide the ways to allow the homeless to make more of themselves through education, occupational training, guidance in urban areas, better ways of finding steady jobs, and increase economic improvement for the poor. There is no political party that will not find support if they can do this.

MALNUTRITION

Inflation itself can be a major hurdle for the homeless and the poor, and is felt more in the city than in rural areas. Presently, rising food costs affects everyone, but for the poor, they often have to reduce how much they can eat, or cut out completely such things as chappatis, good

milk, dal, or rice. And to have enough food, there may be the sacrifice of one's home.

As it is, according to a CNN-IBN report and in the India Tribune of April 12, 2008, there are about 6,000 Indian children who die everyday from malnutrition. This is happening especially in the areas of Uttar Pradesh, such as Lalitpur and Varansi. When parents are poor, or have to cut back on food supplies because of inflation, the children are the first victims, though unknowing to the parents who mean well. Women are next. Abject poverty, lack of basic health facilities, and poor health amongst women are a major factor in why children are born unhealthy, and remain undernourished and less developed both physically, mentally, and intellectually.

The formation of the brain in a fetus is the first to be affected by a poor health condition of the mother, who may be chronically malnourished since birth, generation after generation. Even if women start being fed nicely when they get pregnant and lactate, and even if the male children are overfed after birth, the problems still remain because the genetic cellular blueprint of the fetus, including the metabolism, was already formed in the mother's ova and blood, even before conception. Overfeeding of a woman at the birth of a male child does not help either, because the already imbalanced metabolism of the mother and child become further imbalanced by the excess just like it was imbalanced by the previous insufficient nutrition. This is what lays the foundations for other serious future conditions in the child connected with over-eating, like diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, immune weakness, and so on. For this reason, over 2/3 of the children born in India are severely affected by malnourishment and genetic defects, and the problems get compounded in early childhood. Do you think this has anything to do with the future of India if it cannot be corrected? You bet.

Malnutrition and mistreatment of women, especially in backward and illiterate groups of population who are already prey to ignorant beliefs and a bad quality of life, fatally brings complications in childbirth and poor health in children and in the subsequent adult life.

Malnourishment does not necessarily mean a low count of calories in a person's diet. An imbalanced diet or the body's inability to properly utilize the nutrients are also major factors. Ironically, in most cases the cause is not simply the lack of food. Especially in rural areas food is generally easy to grow, and vegetables, greens, fruits, etc., could be cultivated even in kitchen gardens or wastelands without much labor and expense. Local self-sufficiency in villages is amply possible, especially in regards to nutrition and health. The actual cause of

malnutrition and the growing rates of genetic diseases and imperfections is ignorance, and the lack of a proper variety of food.

Other problems that the government must tackle are the immunization on one side and the genetic effects of immunization conducted without sufficient information on the other side. Uninformed or misinformed application of allopathic medicine has already created major health problems in industrialized countries, and now the effects are beginning to be felt in India. Compounding the problem is the growth in environmental pollution, also largely due to misinformation or lack of information.

Therefore, if India wants to be more productive, it will require a healthier society, beginning with its children, which depends on its mothers. Everyone needs better food and nutrition for better strength, brain power, and better health in general. There, various food distribution programs are required. And we cannot leave the poor to their own devices if they do not have the means to find stable economic income. India needs to spend more of its money on the poor so that they do not need to remain poor. And that often begins not just with free food distribution and medical facilities, but also better occupational training and education.

LITERACY

In 1951, the literacy percentage of the population was 18%. In 1998, it had risen to 64%. So India is making great strides in bringing its population to a higher level of literacy, which is the basis for a higher education and a more productive society. However, literacy campaigns were often conducted for political purposes by Christians and communists (Kerala has a literacy rate of 100%), creating new problems while solving a previous one. They had become literate for the purpose of becoming indoctrinated in foreign and often anti-Indian views.

Another problem connected with literacy is the sad plight of women in India. In the 1990s, the percentage of illiteracy among women (national average) was still 75% in urban areas and 95% in rural areas. The difficulties women have faced in India start from inequality in education. This is another challenge which still needs to be improved greatly.

When the purdah was imposed by Muslim rulers on Hindu society, women lost all influence in the community and were denied education, even literacy. Even today, the results of the purdah are still

afflicting Indian society: especially among Muslims women are generally discouraged from public careers, have few rights to choose their partner or to divorce, or remarry if they become widows, even though this is changing in urban areas. The dowry and the exorbitant costs of marriages also put a tremendous burden on the families, especially among the poor, and this is a reason for female infanticide and abortions of female fetuses.

Additionally, people obviously forget about the vast numbers of women in India who are forced to become the breadwinners of the family for various reasons, by laboring very hard every day in the fields, factories, road construction sites, etc., with considerably lower wages than their fellow male workers.

Unfortunately, the problem of ignorance, lack of education, malnutrition, and unequal treatment of women is not limited to illiterate and destitute sections of society, it also affects wealthy and "educated" families who send boys to schools but believe that the only possible future of a girl is getting married. The point to understand is that the lack of education, connected with major problems such as lack of hygiene and proper nutrition in girl children and women in general, has gradually weakened the genetic structure of many Indians (not only females but males, too), both at physical and intellectual levels.

Amartya Sen, India's Nobel Prize-winning economist, explains that the literacy rate in Indian adults is presently 52%, and malnourishment strikes 64% of its children. And large numbers of children under 12 in seven major Indian cities are afflicted with lead poisoning, all of which affects the intelligence levels of the children. If we put all this together, it will provide a picture of where India needs to begin putting its energy to allow for a healthier, better educated, better nourished, and more physically, mentally, intellectually, and spiritually productive and balanced society.

Individual efforts have been started to deal with this problem, not waiting for the government to come up to speed on this, and other people can also participate. The Ekal Vidyalaya program is the one teacher schools that are established for benefiting and educating the deprived rural areas of India. They provide children with primary, health, and economic education, along with self-empowerment. More than 70% of India lives in its villages, Ekal Vidyalaya offers courses in such topics as math, reading, writing, moral education, handicrafts, physical training, and general knowledge. Health education includes hygiene, sanitation, disease prevention, and curative treatments. This is a way to help give

children a fighting chance to overcome some of the most basic problems that they face in India.

Presently, there are 27,114 one-teacher schools, which provide education for 830,420 rural children, or which 8,698 are being supported by generous donations from the USA. There are also 11,450 healthcare centers. These can certainly make a difference, especially in regard to the way India will be increasingly dependent on its rural areas for more produce and foods to support the growing population. Education of rural India will help make this more efficient.

OVERPOPULATION

The population of India is also becoming a major challenge. Overpopulation is when the country's population density, and its expanding social growth, exceeds the capacity of its environment to supply the health and food requirements of its people. The whole world is increasing in population. Even the United States is expected to increase by another 200 million people by mid-century to nearly 500 million people, and estimates are that the world itself will be around 9 billion by 2050. But of all nations, China and India are increasing the fastest.

The population of India on March 1st, 2001 was 1,027,015,247 persons. By July of 2008 it was estimated that the population had increased to 1,147,995,898. The current trends indicate that India will soon become the world's most populous country with an annual increase of 1.4%, or about 15.5 million people a year. This means that India could be a nation of 1.6 billion by 2050.

A major factor in the growth in population is the increase in life expectancy. When India attained independence in 1947, life averaged about 33 years. Now, thanks to improved standards of healthcare, life expectancy has risen to the mid-60s. The birth rate has been falling, but not fast enough. India was the first country to launch a national family planning program, which helped the fertility rate decline by more than 40% since the 1960s. Today the average number of children per woman is around three. Thus, some feel that India's increased income per capita, and the growth of the consumer class, and the decrease in the annual population growth rate from 1.8% to 1.4% today, could provide a leveling off of this trend to some degree. In this way, it is hoped that India may follow the pattern of other developed nations wherein their

birthrates have stabilized, some even to the negative. But this remains to be seen.

WATER: As the population increases in India, there are the problems of air pollution, deforestation, which leads to desertification of its land and less means for farming. But the most serious will be acquiring fresh, clean water. One reason for this is that the water table in India is sinking. Many farmers have witnessed the water table sink 30 feet to over 100 feet in the past 30 years. Many water wells that used to work are now dried up, requiring the drilling of increasingly deeper wells to get water. This is because much more water is extracted than is replenished by nature. This is a major concern when many farmers cannot get crops from their fields without irrigation. When there is no water, there is no produce, especially for water-intensive crops like rice.

Even in the cities, slum-dwellers have a life or death struggle to acquire necessary water. But corporations also need water for production. However, it is the unsafe water that is the primary killer of children in India. It is reported that waterborne illnesses cause 80% of all diseases in the country. Without safe water, neither villagers nor the large corporations can survive. With its long coastlines, India may have to increase the number of desalination plants it is building to produce more water, just as Israel has done. Keeping its rivers clean would be another great improvement. Presently, many of India's rivers, especially the Ganga and the Yamuna, are becoming increasingly dead with pollution, their waters unfit for anything.

FARMING: India has a high percentage of arable land. Half of India's land can be used for growing crops. Food production has increased, yet many people are still hungry or suffer from malnutrition. This is because of the incapability and incompetence of government planning, not because of a lack of facility. Yet, if proper preparations for the increasing population are not developed, then India will not be able to provide for itself and fall increasingly behind in fulfilling its needs. Thus, the requirement to import food will become more imperative.

Today, India imports ever-increasing quantities of pulses, like lentils and peas, and vegetable oils. Farmers cannot keep up with the demand. Furthermore, the cultivable land is shrinking, desertification is growing, and government policies are neglecting the farmers. This makes it even more unlikely that the next generation will pursue farming because it is presently a losing proposition. Thus, India will become increasingly farther behind in meeting its agricultural demands. This means that poverty will also grow. And to prevent this, the only solution

is an increase in developing the rural areas, especially for farming and providing the people there the means for economic stability.

If India expects to support a population of 1.6 billion by 2050, India will have to increase agricultural production dramatically to meet the demand, but there is little that can be done to raise ground water levels. However, finding the ways to clean the rivers will be a huge step forward.

POVERTY Presently, an estimated 300 million Indians are now below the poverty level. More children are produced from the poorer sections of society than those who are more developed and educated. Thus, unless there is a decrease in these growth patterns, many think there will be a population explosion in the coming years. And more children produced from the poor section of society means an increase in those that suffer from poverty, or a widening of the underprivileged classes. This will tax India's agriculture and its cities even more, meaning more who suffer from malnutrition, a poor diet, or even starvation. And malnutrition may also cause low birth weight, birth defects, and forms of retardation because the mother cannot get or afford to have enough resources to properly sustain a fetus in her womb. This only increases the burdens of the poor and perpetuates the cycle of taxing the supplies of goods and facilities that India needs to provide. Thus, there is a great need to offer the means by which people can rise above poverty. Unfortunately, though education is the foremost way to do this, India's educational systems are presently failing to keep up. Literacy of its people has increased, but so have the total number of illiterate people because of poverty. So, there is a great need to change this with an increase in educational programs.

THE CITIES: In regard to the growing cities, the infrastructures of many of them are stretched to the limits already. It will be taxed even more with the additional population that is expected. Yet, the water, sewer, and sanitation systems are already in decay, such as in Mumbai. So the problems will increase as such systems are strained to the maximum. When London experienced a population boom in the 1850s, the infrastructure could not handle the excess waste, and huge outbreaks of Cholera took place wherein 50,000 died over one summer. Developed nations are beyond these kinds of problems, but those developing countries will still have to tackle such issues.

Traffic is also becoming unbearable in parts of some cities, and the pollution which follows is increasing and spreading. As one drives from Mathura (three hours south of Delhi) toward Delhi, about half way there you can begin to see the haze of pollution hovering over rural areas.

Unfortunately, this is likely to increase as more people, and a growing consumer class, all want their own cars, especially as cars become less expensive and more easily affordable and available. In some parts of Delhi you can practically walk as fast as you can drive.

* * *

For these reasons, the problems and challenges listed herein that India has been and will be forced to face will increase if India does not prepare for the future and take care of them. It must have ways and plans to address each of these issues so it can move forward with the least amount of inconvenience to its people and environment. Otherwise, the great progress it has been making will begin to fall into decline, and to such a degree that it may quickly begin losing much of the development it has made since it attained independence in 1947. But in the action plans that are in the next section we will find a few ways in which private individuals are already helping to alleviate a few of these problems. And when these are joined by organizational efforts, much headway can be made very quickly.

PART FOUR

WHAT WE CAN DO NOW

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Hindus Must Stand Strong for Dharma

One of the most important things we can do to start showing what is actually the Vedic tradition is to be willing and ready to stand strong for it. All followers of Vedic Dharma should be educated in the philosophy enough to be able to answer questions of all kinds regarding the philosophy, at least to cover the basics. These should be answered in a quick, concise, and effective manner, regardless of whether they are criticisms or simply asked by those who are misinformed but sincerely interested. In this way, we can show that the Hindu tradition is not some shallow philosophy or a bunch of ancient myths or superstitions, which is exactly what some non-Hindus think. We have to show them that this is a profound way of life that has been descending down through generations for thousands of years. And that it contains deep insights and spiritual knowledge that has been found no where else and which has been a guiding light for all of humanity. But to do that all Hindus must be properly educated in their culture. No one should be too timid to be able to correct various misconceptions that some people may have, or to address their criticisms of the culture.

Defending Vedic Dharma should be accepted as a collective effort for each of us. If we do not defend Dharma in the world, then ruin to you and society is automatic, either gradually or quickly. Dharma means the universal spiritual truths that maintain balance in the world. Without that, imbalance and deterioration will surely follow.

So just as when a person wants to be expert in martial arts, he or she must practice regularly so he can defend himself in any number of situations or from any kind of an attack. Similarly, we have to practice defending our culture in any kind of circumstance in which we may find ourselves or from any kind of questions that may be presented. And we need to be able to take on such questions without getting emotional or defensive or provoked into anger. We must take them on coolly, calmly, and confidently. And this takes practice.

Regular workshops should be held in temples or even in homes so Dharmists or Hindus can practice being prepared with the proper information and response. If this is done in a group setting with others involved, this could be quite fun, entertaining, educational, and certainly bolster pride in their own culture and invoke the courage to defend it whenever the need arises.

If someone asks you questions about Vedic culture, then suddenly you become a representative for the whole Dharmic tradition and everyone else who is a Dharmist/Hindu. Then you and all Vedic Dharmists will be judged not only by your response, but also by the depth of your answer, as well as your attitude. This means whether you are cool, calm, or confident, or if you become flustered, emotional, defensive, angry, or have little depth to your response. Thus, we have to be prepared. We all have to have the pride and be educated in our culture to defend it and provide succinct, accurate, and thoughtful answers. And these have to make sense, whether it is to those who are looking to criticize, or to those who may sincerely be asking a question but simply do not understand Vedic culture.

An example of what I mean is when I was in Siliguri, India back in 2003 when I was on a lecture tour. I, along with some of the elders from a local Hindu organization, attended a press conference. The press from the local newspapers started asking various questions. I thought they were simple enough, but the questions were not answered in an uncomplicated manner. The elders started getting worked up by the questions and the lack of understanding of the press, and then members of the press also started getting aggravated. Emotions started running high with misunderstandings all the way around. Then I got up to speak and made a simple introductory statement and then took questions. I answered each one directly and briefly.

As I did so, I could see members of the press become quiet, possibly because I was a Westerner and they wanted to hear what a non-Indian had to say about Vedic culture. But I could see their heads nodding up and down in a positive way. Then, as they were taking notes, they said, “Yes, these are the kind of answers we wanted to hear. We can use this in our reports.” So they were satisfied. And a positive press report was published in the next day’s paper. But I wondered what would have happened, and what kind of news article would have been printed, if I had not answered some of the questions and handled the press conference the way I did. I am sure it would have come out much more negatively. At that press conference, I had become a representative of the Hindu community, and the local Hindus that were there were not adept at

handling questions and the press appropriately. This certainly does not attract others to their point of view.

So, when it comes to who will speak for Hinduism, we all must be ready to speak for it, but we must be educated to know what to say. We also need to know how best to handle the press and media. Often they are looking for stories to print, and we just need to know how to fulfill that need. Then we also benefit in getting our views across.

We need to make all the necessary information easily accessible to everyone. We need to be sure the proper books are available. We need to use modern technology to our advantage to make inspiring presentations. We must have classes for presenting powerful views on the advantages of Vedic culture with insightful speakers. And if we do not know what to say to others, we must learn from those who do know. Or we may also invite noteworthy speakers to give talks.

This is one of the reasons why I have written and supplied so many books, such as *Vedic Culture: The Difference It Can Make in Your Life* and *The Power of the Dharma* or *The Secret Teachings of the Vedas*, and many other. These books not only show the various ways Vedic culture can be used for people to reach their highest potential, but also explains the basics of the Hindu culture and Dharmic philosophy so people can understand it quickly and easily and then be able to explain it to others. As Hindus or Dharmists become prolific in sharing the advantages and benefits of their culture, others will also see the importance of its spiritual philosophy and way of life.

Another example of what I am talking about is that at a conference in Houston in July of 2006, I met one Westerner who had put a slide show together on Hindu/Vedic culture and had shown it at a school and three churches, Catholic and Methodist. These were for people who were sincerely interested. However, the teachers at the school told him that they had asked the parents of some of their Indian students if they would like to give a presentation on India and Hinduism. However, the parents responded that they did not know enough about their own culture to give such a talk. So here was an opportunity wherein Indians could give a correct understanding of what the Vedic tradition is all about in a friendly environment, but they could not do it. This should not be the case. Fortunately, the need for such a presentation was fulfilled by a Westerner who had sufficient knowledge and interest to give the students and teachers at the school some genuine insights into the Vedic tradition.

Sometimes it is plain to see that Western, non-Indian Hindus, those not born into the tradition but have enthusiastically adopted it, have

more pride and knowledge of the culture than many Indian Hindus. This should be a source of inspiration for Indian-born Hindus, and they should use such people for speaking engagements. We have many of these kinds of bold and inspiring speakers in my organization, called The Vedic Friends Association [www.vedicfriends.org] who can lecture and have written books on the dynamics of Vedic culture. Anyone can contact them to schedule talks and check out their books.

Furthermore, if the parents do not know enough about Hindu culture and do not have enough pride or care to teach their children properly, or at least enroll them in classes at a local temple or *Balgokulam*, then with all the emphasis on conversions displayed by the monotheistic religions, that Indian Hindu family will no longer be Hindu in about two generations. However, I've talked to some Indian Hindus who have said it would take only one generation for the sons and daughters in that family to lose their Hindu faith. This is a reason why in many areas strong Hindus may be disappearing. There is a solution to this, and that is to make sure Hindus are educated in their own culture enough to know how and why they should pass it along to the next generation.

WHAT IS VEDIC CULTURE

A simple explanation of Vedic culture is that the Vedic tradition is a spiritual path and a way of life. It is a process by which we understand how to be better human beings, how to realize our spiritual nature, how to recognize that spiritual essence in each and every living being, how to understand our relationship with God and the universe and all other living entities, and how to live according to that relationship. It is the most dynamic means of elevating the consciousness of humanity and society available today.

It is also a means of understanding our spiritual connection with each other. By having respect for everyone's spiritual identity, we can perceive that my contribution to your well-being is an automatic contribution to my own existence. Thus, we all work together toward attaining a clean mind and pure heart. In this way, by working together, society at large is in a state of constant improvement. That is one of the goals of the Vedic way of life, and all those who seriously follow it.

So who should be afraid to repeat this? It is quite a simple explanation. In this way, we can all become Vedic ambassadors and share with people the basic understanding of what is Vedic culture and

some of the many benefits it has provided for thousands of years and what it can do for us today. But that starts with making sure we have the proper education and the answers to provide when we need them.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Sanatana-Dharma: Its Real Meaning

When it comes to understanding the meaning of Sanatana-dharma, we have to be aware of its Sanskrit definition. The root of the word *dharma* comes from *dhri*, which means to uphold or maintain. The Sanskrit says *dharayati iti dharmaha*, which translates as "Dharma is that which upholds." However, not only what is supported is Dharma, but that which does the supporting is also Dharma, *dhriyate iti dharmaha*. So dharma consists of both the force that sustains as well as what is sustained. It can also be said that there is the path of Dharma as well as its conclusion, the object of Dharma, or what we are seeking, the goal of life. So, Dharma is the means as well as the goal.

Dharma is also said to be the force which maintains the universe. Where there is Dharma, there is harmony and balance individually, socially, and inter-galactically. So the path of Dharma brings about the harmony and contentment that is also another aspect of what we are seeking. In this way, we want harmony inwardly, in our own consciousness, but we also cannot have individual peace unless there is harmony or cooperation socially, amongst the masses. So, where there is no Dharma, there is disharmony and a state of being that is out of balance. And socially it means that without Dharma, there is a lack of cooperation, along with escalating quarrel and fighting. This often manifests as a lack of distribution of resources, whereas some parts of the world may experience abundance of water, food, and fuel, yet other parts are starving. Or by dishonest manipulation of supply and demand some necessities become priced so high that they are out of reach for the poor. In this way, when we act against the law of Dharma, we disrupt the very harmony and cooperation that we want. In other words, we create a life for ourselves in which there is stress, confusion, discontent, and frustration. And when we feel that way, this becomes our contribution to the general social condition. It is the exact opposite of what we wish to attain. Thus, to live a life outside of Dharma means to work against ourselves.

Furthermore, if we live on the basis of lust and greed, to accumulate possessions, money, and sensual pleasure by the demands of the mind and senses, it will become most difficult to follow the path of Dharma. Of course, when this is the case, we often see that such people become increasingly discontent and out of balance, enamored by the illusory happiness in material existence. Doing what should not be done is called *vidharma*, which is a type of *adharma* or nondharmic activity. The conclusion, therefore, is that if we want happiness and peace we must learn how to live according to the path of Dharma.

The practice of Dharma should be done not out of compulsion but out of love due to the perception of the Supreme in all living beings. With this motivation, Dharma can assist in preventing injury to others and treating each other respectfully. Dharma also means righteous conduct. This includes following social laws and proper moral activity and behavior. It encourages truthfulness of thought, word, and deed. The point of which is to reach the goal of Dharma.

Dharma also means truth. So we follow the path of Dharma to free ourselves from illusion and reach the ultimate Truth, which is the topmost reality, the spiritual strata. The Absolute Truth means the final philosophical goal and end of all knowledge, or Vedanta, which is God, the Supreme Being. So when we want to attain liberation from material existence, after realizing the futility of its temporary nature, and wish to reach God, then it becomes much easier to follow the path of Dharma and overcome the temptations of the temporary material world. Then we can let go of the illusory objects that are, in fact, hurdles on the path to Truth and God, and happiness in general.

The more we are attracted to the material existence and in accumulating the illusory objects to satisfy our mind and senses, in essence, the more hurdles we are bringing into our life. And we must overcome these obstructions at some point to reach the Absolute Truth. Therefore, life lived according to the law of Dharma means the freer we become from false obstacles, from stress, from false hangups and mood swings, and inner conflicts. Thus, the freer we are to experience our real selves as spiritual beings. And the more society chooses to follow the path of Dharma, the more easily we can attain an existence of cooperation and harmony instead of one of wars, conflict, terror, and killing. So whatever we do, even if it is doing business, making money, politics, etc., it should be done on the basis of Dharma. Then things will progress in the proper way. Following Dharma will bring both material well-being as well as final liberation from material existence. Thus, one can attain all that this world can offer through the path of Dharma.

On a national, ethnic, or racial level, Dharma is an instrument of unity, not divisiveness. That which helps unite everyone and develop love and universal brotherhood is Dharma. That which causes discord or disharmony or provokes hatred is *adharma*. That which works against or tries to destroy Dharma is *adharma*. With this understanding we can perceive that certain religions that exist on this planet that encourage divisiveness between those that are "saved" and those that are supposedly going to hell, or which primarily focus on differences between their sect and others, are actually *adharmic*. Those religions that do not teach that we are all spiritual beings, all children of the same God, all equal in the eyes of God, are *adharmic*. They may merely be limited in their depth of knowledge and awareness, but until they adopt the Dharmic principles they will continue to produce disagreements, restlessness, harsh attitudes, and even hatred amongst people in the name of religion. The reason is that they are absent of real transcendental knowledge and deep spiritual insights. Since such religions lack Dharma, they will not be able to deliver one to Dharma, or to the Absolute Truth. Thus, lack of peace and harmony amongst various religions will be commonplace until this is remedied. In this way, the path of Dharma is more than a religion or belief system. It is the means to directly perceive and live according to that higher reality and spiritual unity between us all.

So we can see that the path of Dharma is more of a way of life. Some people may say that Vedic Dharma, or Hinduism, is another religion. Yet, if we understand this principle of Dharma, we can see that it is not merely another religion or "ism." It is a way of life that is lived with every moment and every breath. It is a matter of raising our consciousness to the highest level possible. It is a matter of understanding and living according to the universal spiritual principles that apply to everyone. Thus, we reach our fullest potential, which in the end is on the spiritual platform.

For example, when one comes to the level of real Dharma, then all of his or her actions are in accordance with the Dharma, the path of harmony and balance, in tune with the Divine. For example, in Vedic culture we can find the artful expression of dance. This is just one of many art forms in the Vedic tradition. But on the path of Dharma it is an expression of one's emotional outlet toward God, Ishwara or Krishna. An emotional outlet in this manner means you express yourself to God, you release your love for God, and your thoughts and consciousness become more absorbed in God. So this is also like yoga, a form of dedicated meditation. In this way, the attitude within the dance is unique. It is not

merely an emotional release for satisfying one's own mind, but it is an expression of longing toward becoming united with God. That is yoga. It is Dharma. So in this sense, Dharma means the freedom to naturally express our inner proclivity, which is to get closer to the Absolute Truth, and worship this Truth, this Ishvara or God.

Therefore, on the path of Dharma the dances, the movements, the costumes and jewelry, are all used to either relate the pastimes of God or to enhance our attachment to God. So these are all expressions of Dharma, our eternal nature to love God and be loved by God. Thus, Dharma is also protected by continuing the tradition. For this reason there needs to be a class of men who are dedicated to protect the Dharma. It is only one who has the Dharma that can protect it.

Now when we add the word *Sanatana* to Dharma, it expands the meaning and purpose. *Sanatana* means eternal. So Sanatana-dharma can mean the ancient path that has existed from time immemorial. It is the eternal path which has been given to humanity and comes from beyond the material dimension. Thus, Sanatana-dharma is the inter-dimensional path of progress for all living beings. It is beyond ordinary religion.

It can also be said to be the unceasing and imperishable path of the soul. Sanatana-dharma also means the eternal path and our eternal nature. Dharma means the ultimate nature of the living being, the spirit soul. And the nature or Dharma of the soul is to love and be loved, to serve its most lovable object and to receive love. Just like the Dharma or nature of sugar is to be sweet, we know that if it is not sweet or if it is salty, then it is not sugar. The Dharma of fire is to give light and heat. If it does not do that, then it cannot be fire. So the Sanatana-dharma or eternal nature of the soul is that it is a spiritual being that is naturally connected to God and feels the greatest joy in its constitutional position as a servant of God. The soul needs to love. It cannot do without it. And our nature as human beings reflects the nature of the soul because we are always looking for love. Although when such love is interpreted through the mind and senses, it is often accepted as the satisfaction of the mind and body. This only brings temporary happiness because it is merely a reflection of what we really want and need. So for the soul, the most lovable object is the Lord and the most pleasing things are spiritual relations and exchanges. This is what will give the epitome of bliss that we long for in loving relationships.

So, Sanatana-dharma means both the ultimate spiritual truth and the means to attain it. And that truth is the divine knowledge of the soul. Thus, if there is to be any eternality in our relationships, or any spiritual connection with anything we do, it has to be based on that divine

knowledge of the soul, the ultimate reality. That is the path of Sanatana-dharma, to realize our spiritual identity and then know how to act accordingly.

Therefore, the purpose of life is to follow the path of Dharma which will bring us to the conclusion of recognizing that everything is the energy of God, Brahman. Following this further, the path of Dharma will bring us into union with God. And the highest union is through love and devotion, or *bhakti*. Thus, bhakti-yoga, the process of loving devotion to the Lord, is the epitome of following Sanatana-dharma. Making this the goal of our life means that we are living a life of Dharma. And the ultimate goal of Dharma is to reach God.

Sanatana-dharma is also a matter of understanding. It is an awareness that every particle of this universe is an expansion of God's energies. That it is all an exhibition of the potencies of the Para-Brahman, the Absolute Existence. Dharma is the path to seeing how God is everywhere. Thus, Dharma is not only the path to God but is also in God. A truly liberated person does not worry about liberation, or in going home back to God in the spiritual world. He is already aware that he is in God's energy, whether it is the material or spiritual energy. It is all an exhibition of God's potencies wherever he goes. Thus, the *dharmin*, or Dharmist, the follower of Dharma who sees God everywhere, is already home. Liberation from material existence will follow such a person like a servant.

If we understand this properly, we can see that Sanatana-dharma is the basis of universal truth. It can be applied to anyone at anytime and anywhere in the universe. Thus, many religions can and should include Sanatana-dharma within their approach and outlook. It does not matter in which religion you may be affiliated, you can still benefit and grow within the fold of Sanatana-dharma to reach a higher awareness and perception of your true potential and genuine spiritual identity. In this way, the whole world could reach a new stage in its social and spiritual development, as well as in harmony and cooperation.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

About the Name "Hindu"

Even though many people feel that the terms of "Sanatana-dharma" and "Hinduism" mean or represent the same thing, I feel there needs to be some clarification about the use of the words "Hindu" and "Hinduism." This will provide some understanding why some people do not like to use these names so much. The fact is that true "Hinduism" is based on Vedic knowledge, which is related to our spiritual identity. Many people do accept it to mean the same thing as Sanatana-dharma, which is a more accurate Sanskrit term for the Vedic path. Such an identity is beyond any temporary names as Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or even Hindu. After all, God never describes Himself as belonging to any such category, saying that He is only a Christian God, or a Muslim God, or a Hindu God. That is why some of the greatest spiritual masters from India have avoided identifying themselves only as Hindus. The Vedic path is eternal, and therefore beyond all such temporary designations. So am I calling the name "Hindu" a temporary designation?

We must remember that the term "Hindu" is not even Sanskrit. Numerous scholars say it is not found in any of the Vedic literature. So how can such a name truly represent the Vedic path or culture? And without the Vedic literature, there is no basis for "Hinduism."

Most scholars feel that the name "Hindu" was developed by outsiders, invaders who could not pronounce the name of the Sindhu River properly. According to Sir Monier Williams, the Sanskrit lexicographer, you cannot find an indigenous root for the words Hindu or India. Neither are these words found in any Buddhist or Jain texts, nor any of the official 23 languages of India. Some sources report that it was Alexander the Great who first renamed the River Sindhu as the Indu, dropping the beginning "S", thus making it easier for the Greeks to pronounce. This became known as the Indus. This was when Alexander invaded India around 325 BCE. His Macedonian forces thereafter called the land east of the Indus as India, a name used especially during the British regime. Before this, the Vedic name for the area was Bharatha Varsha, which many people still prefer to call it by that name.

Later, when the Muslim invaders arrived from such places as Afghanistan and Persia, they called the Sindhu River the Hindu River. Thereafter, the name "Hindu" was used to describe the inhabitants from that tract of land in the northwestern provinces of India where the Sindhu River is located, and the region itself was called "Hindustan." Because the Sanskrit sound of "S" converts to "H" in the Parsee language, the Muslims pronounced the Sindhu as "hindu," even though at the time the people of the area did not use the name "hindu" themselves. This word was used by the Muslim foreigners to identify the people and the religion of those who lived in that area. Thereafter, even the Indians conformed to these standards as set by those in power and used the names Hindu and Hindustan. Otherwise, the word has no meaning except for those who place value on it or now use it out of convenience.

Another view of the name "Hindu" shows the confusing nature it causes for understanding the true essence of the spiritual paths of India. As written by R. N. Suryanarayan in his book *Universal Religion* (p.1-2, published in Mysore in 1952), "The political situation of our country from centuries past, say 20-25 centuries, has made it very difficult to understand the nature of this nation and its religion. The western scholars, and historians, too, have failed to trace the true name of this Brahmanland, a vast continent-like country, and, therefore, they have contented themselves by calling it by that meaningless term 'Hindu.' This word, which is a foreign innovation, is not made use by any of our Sanskrit writers and revered Acharyas in their works. It seems that political power was responsible for insisting upon continuous use of the word Hindu. The word Hindu is found, of course, in Persian literature. *Hindu-e-falak* means 'the black of the sky' and 'Saturn.' In the Arabic language *Hind* not *Hindu* means nation. It is shameful and ridiculous to have read all along in history that the name Hindu was given by the Persians to the people of our country when they landed on the sacred soil of Sindhu."

The location wherein the word "Hindu" occurs for what some people feel the first time is in the *Avesta* of the Iranians in its description of the country of India and its people. As their state religion of Zoroastrianism grew, the word seemed to take on a derogatory meaning. And of course as Islam spread in India, the words "Hindu" and "Hindustan" became even more disrespected and even hated in the Persian arena, and more prominent in the Persian and Arabic literature after the 11th century.

Another view of the source of the name Hindu is based on a derogatory meaning. It is said that, "Moreover, it is correct that this name

[Hindu] has been given to the original Aryan race of the region by Muslim invaders to humiliate them. In Persian, says our author, the word means slave, and according to Islam, all those who did not embrace Islam were termed as slaves." (*Maharishi Shri Dayanand Saraswati Aur Unka Kaam*, edited by Lala Lajpat Rai, published in Lahore, 1898, in the Introduction)

Furthermore, a Persian dictionary titled *Lughet-e-Kishwari*, published in Lucknow in 1964, gives the meaning of the word Hindu as "*chore* [thief], *dakoo* [dacoit], *raahzan* [waylayer], and *ghulam* [slave]." In another dictionary, *Urdu-Feroze-ul-Laghat* (Part One, p. 615) the Persian meaning of the word Hindu is further described as *barda* (obedient servant), *sia faam* (black color) and *kaalaa* (black). So these are all derogatory expressions for the translation of the term *hindu* in the Persian label of the people of India.

So, basically, Hindu is merely a continuation of a Muslim term that became popular only within the last 1300 years. In this way, we can understand that it is not a valid Sanskrit term, nor does it have anything to do with the true Vedic culture or the Vedic spiritual path. No religion ever existed that was called "Hinduism" until the Indian people in general placed value on that name, as given by those who dominated over them, and accepted its use. Furthermore, the term has been used to convey demeaning connotations. So is it any wonder that some Indian *acharyas* and Vedic organizations do not care to use the term?

The real confusion started when the name "Hinduism" was used to indicate the religion of the Indian people. The words "Hindu" and "Hinduism" were used frequently by the British with the effect of focusing on the religious differences between the Muslims and the people who became known as "Hindus." This was done with the rather successful intention of creating friction among the people of India. This was in accord with the British policy of divide and rule to make it easier for their continued dominion over the country.

However, we should mention that others who try to justify the word "Hindu" present the idea that rishis of old, several thousand years ago, also called central India Hindustan, and the people who lived there Hindus. The following verse, said to be from the *Vishnu Purana*, *Padma Purana*, and the *Bruhaspati Samhita*, is provided as proof, yet I am still waiting to learn the exact location where we can find this verse:

Aasindo Sindhu Paryantham Yasyabharatha Bhoomikah
Mathrubhuh Pithrubhoochaiva sah Vai Hindurithismrithaah

Another verse reads as: *Sapta sindhu muthal Sindhu maha samudhram vareyulla Bharatha bhoomi aarkkellamaano Mathru bhoomiyum Pithru bhoomiyumayittullathu, avaraanu hindukkalaayi ariyappedunnathu*. Both of these verses more or less indicate that whoever considers the land of Bharatha Bhoomi between Sapta Sindu and the Indian Ocean as his or her motherland and fatherland is known as Hindu. However, here we also have the real and ancient name of India mentioned, which is Bharatha Bhoomi. "Bhoomi" (or Bhumi) means Mother Earth, but Bharatha is the land of Bharatha or Bharatha Varsha, which is the land of India. In numerous Vedic references in the *Puranas*, *Mahabharata*, and other Vedic texts, the area of India is referred to as Bharatha Varsha or the land of Bharatha and not as Hindustan. The name Bharatha Varsha certainly helps capture the roots and glorious past of the country and its people.

Another couple of references that are used, though the exact location of which I am not sure, include the following:

Himalayam Samaarafya Yaavat Hindu Sarovaram
Tham Devanirmmitham desham Hindustanam Prachakshathe

Himalyam muthal Indian maha samudhram vareyulla
devanirmmithamaya deshaththe Hindustanam ennu parayunnu

These again indicate that the region between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean is called Hindustan. Thus, the conclusion of this is that all Indians are Hindus regardless of their caste and religion. Of course, not everyone is going to agree with that.

Others say that in the *Rig Veda*, Bharata is referred to as the country of "Sapta Sindhu," i.e. the country of seven great rivers. This is, of course, acceptable. However, exactly which book and chapter this verse comes from needs to be clarified. Nonetheless, some say that the word "Sindhu" refers to rivers and sea, and not merely to the specific river called "Sindhu." Furthermore, it is said that in Vedic Sanskrit, according to ancient dictionaries, "sa" was pronounced as "ha." Thus, "Sapta Sindhu" was pronounced as "Hapta Hindu." So this is how the word "Hindu" is supposed to have come into being. It is also said that the ancient Persians referred to Bharatha as "Hapta Hind," as recorded in their ancient classic "Bem Riyadh." So this is another reason why some scholars came to believe that the word "Hindu" had its origin in Persia.

Another theory is that the name "Hindu" does not even come from the name Sindhu. Mr. A. Krishna Kumar of Hyderabad, India

explains. "This [Sindhu/Hindu] view is untenable since Indians at that time enviably ranked highest in the world in terms of civilization and wealth would not have been without a name. They were not the unknown aborigines waiting to be discovered, identified and Christened by foreigners." He cites an argument from the book *Self-Government in India* by N. B. Pavgee, published in 1912. The author tells of an old Swami and Sanskrit scholar Mangal Nathji, who found an ancient *Purana* known as *Brihannaradi* in the Sham village, Hoshiarpur, Punjab. It contained this verse:

himalayam samarabhya yavat bindusarovaram
hindusthanamiti qyatam hi antaraksharayogatah

Again the exact location of this verse in the *Purana* is missing, but Kumar translates it as: "The country lying between the Himalayan mountains and Bindu Sarovara (Cape Comorin sea) is known as Hindusthan by combination of the first letter 'hi' of 'Himalaya' and the last compound letter 'ndu' of the word 'Bindu.'"

This, of course, is supposed to have given rise to the name "Hindu," indicating an indigenous origin. The conclusion of which is that people living in this area are thus known as "Hindus."

So again, in any way these theories may present their information, and in any way you look at it, the name "Hindu" started simply as a bodily and regional designation. The name "Hindu" refers to a location and its people and originally had nothing to do with the philosophies, religion, or culture of the people, which could certainly change from one thing to another. It is like saying that all people from India are Indians. Sure, that is acceptable as a name referring to a location, but what about their religion, faith, and philosophy? These are known by numerous names according to the various outlooks and beliefs. Thus, they are not all Hindus, as many people who do not follow the Vedic system already object to calling themselves by that name. So "Hindu" is not the most appropriate name of a spiritual path, but the Sanskrit term of Sanatana-dharma is much more accurate. The culture of the ancient Indians and their early history is Vedic culture or Vedic Dharma. So it is more appropriate to use a name that is based on that culture for those who follow it, rather than a name that merely addresses the location of a people.

It seems that only with the Vedic kings of the Vijayanagara Empire in 1352 was the word "Hindu" used with pride by Bukkal who described himself as "Hinduraya suratrana." Whereas the main Sanskrit

texts, and even the rituals that have been performed in the temples from millennia ago, used the word "Bharatha" in reference to the area of present-day India. Thus, it is traditionally and technically more accurate to refer to the land of India as "Bharatha" or "Bharatha Varsha."

Unfortunately, the word "Hindu" has gradually been adopted by most everyone, even the Indians, and is presently applied in a very general way, so much so, in fact, that now "Hinduism" is often used to describe anything from religious activities to even Indian social or nationalistic events. Some of these so-called "Hindu" events are not endorsed in the Vedic literature, and, therefore, must be considered non-Vedic. Thus, not just anyone can call themselves a "Hindu" and still be considered a follower of the Vedic path. Nor can any activity casually be dubbed as a part of Hinduism and thoughtlessly be considered a part of the true Vedic culture.

Therefore, the Vedic spiritual path is more precisely called Sanatana-dharma, which means the eternal, unchanging occupation of the soul in its relation to the Supreme Being. Just as the Dharma of sugar is to be sweet, this does not change. And if it is not sweet, then it is not sugar. Or the Dharma of fire is to give warmth and light. If it does not do that, then it is not fire. In the same way, there is a particular Dharma or nature of the soul, which is *sanatana*, or eternal. It does not change. So there is the state of Dharma and the path of Dharma. Following the principles of Sanatana-dharma can bring us to the pure state of regaining our forgotten spiritual identity and relationship with God. This is the goal of Vedic knowledge and its system of self-realization. Thus, the knowledge of the *Vedas* and all Vedic literature, such as Lord Krishna's message in *Bhagavad-gita*, as well as the teachings of the *Upanishads* and *Puranas*, are not limited to only "Hindus" who are restricted to a certain region of the planet or family of birth. Such knowledge is actually meant for the whole world. As everyone is a spiritual being and has the same spiritual essence as described according to the principles of Sanatana-dharma, then everyone should be given the right and privilege to understand this knowledge. It cannot be held for an exclusive group or region of people.

Sanatana-dharma is also the fully developed spiritual philosophy that fills whatever gaps may be left by the teachings of other less philosophically developed religions. Direct knowledge of the soul is a "Universal Spiritual Truth" which can be applied by all people, in any part of the world, in any time in history, and in any religion. It is eternal. Therefore, being an eternal spiritual truth, it is beyond all time and worldly designations. Knowledge of the soul is the essence of Vedic

wisdom and is more than what the name "Hindu" implies, especially after understanding from where the name comes.

Even if the time arrives in this deteriorating age of Kali-yuga after many millennia when Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and even Hinduism (as we call it today) may disappear from the face of the earth, there will still be the Vedic teachings that remain as a spiritual and universal truth, even if such truths may be forgotten and must be re-established again in this world by Lord Krishna Himself. I doubt then that He will use the name "Hindu." He certainly said nothing of the sort when He last spoke *Bhagavad-gita*.

Thus, although I do not feel that "Hindu" is a proper term to represent the Vedic Aryan culture or spiritual path, I do use the word from time to time to mean the same thing since it is already so much a part of everyone's vocabulary. Otherwise, since I follow the Vedic path of Sanatana-dharma, I call myself a *Sanatana-dharmist.* That reduces the need to use the label of "Hindu" and also helps focus on the universal nature of the Vedic path. Therefore, I propose that all those who consider themselves to be Hindus begin to use this term *Sanatana-dharmist*, which not only refers to the correct Sanskrit terminology, but also more accurately depicts the true character and spiritual intention of the Vedic path. Others have also used the terms *Sanatanis*, *dharmins*, or even *Dharmists*, both of which are closer to the real meaning within Vedic culture.

However, for political and legal purposes it may be convenient to continue using the name Hindu for the time being. Until the terms Sanatana-dharma or Vedic Dharma become more recognized by international law and society in general, "Hindu" may remain the term behind which to rally for Vedic culture. But over the long term, it is a name that is bound to change in meaning to the varying views of it due to its lack of a real linguistic foundation. Being based merely on the values people place in it, its meaning and purpose will vary from person to person, culture to culture, and certainly from generation to generation. We can see how this took place with the British in India. So there will be the perpetuation of the problems with the name and why some people and groups will not want to accept it.

Yet by the continued and increased use of the terms Vedic Dharma or Sanatana-dharma, at least by those who are more aware of the definitive Sanskrit basis of these terms, they will gain recognition as being the more correct terminology. It merely takes some time to make the proper adjustments.

This is the way to help cure the misinterpretation or misunderstandings that may come from using the name “Hindu,” and also end the reasons why some groups do not care to identify themselves under that name. After all, most Vedic groups, regardless of their orientation and the specific path they follow, can certainly unite behind the term Vedic Dharma.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Save Your Culture

After touring the area of Northeastern India in late 2002, I could more easily understand the value of the culture of that region, and the need to protect and preserve it. The people of the area are some of the nicest, simplest, and most friendly people I have ever encountered. They show a high degree of respect toward others and for life itself. It would be a real shame if that should ever change.

On the other hand, I come from America, a land rich in facility, technology, wealth, business, global enterprises, and the desire in most everyone to climb the social ladder to increasingly better positions and higher pay. It also has the high crime, the pollution, as well as the selfishness, competition, lack of respect for others, and many impersonal relationships that come with such an environment. Now I ask you, is this real progress? Is this the kind of progress we should be making?

We have to have the foresight to see that opulence without culture and time for introspection leads to a shallow life, even a meaningless life. These days in the West, people look for culture, but since America is so young, we have to look for it from outside our borders. And people in the East may be surprised that Westerners often look toward them for culture. Westerners often look to the East for a deeper understanding of life, of who they are, and to learn what is their connection with the universe and God. There are more Westerners than ever before who practice yoga, study Eastern philosophy, and who are adopting dietary and health disciplines of the East for improving their lives. So the people of India should not think that giving up their own culture or spiritual path to adopt some new technology or Western religion is going to be the answer to their problems. That is not the way it works.

As I have traveled all over India, I have seen that one of the prime reasons for many of the social and environmental problems of the country is not the culture itself, but it is the distancing or even a disconnection from it. Remaining fixed in the true principles of your own indigenous culture is often the means of keeping social problems to a minimum. But that also means staying educated in what your culture

actually teaches and handing that knowledge down to younger generations so that it never becomes lost.

This is something that is important to understand. The Vedic and indigenous cultures of India are the oldest in the world. They have been developed by some of the wisest sages the planet has ever seen. This culture has given some of the most profound knowledge and deepest insights and understanding of life that mankind has ever known. It has existed for thousands of years. So who is to tell me that it is not good enough to last for another several thousand years? Who is to tell me that its philosophy is backward or not up with the times? Do not accept another person coming to tell you that your own culture is not good enough, especially a foreigner who mostly wants you to convert to his Western form of religion, or who tells you that what you do is evil. Since when did it become evil? Who is he to tell you this when his own culture or religion does not have the many years of development as your own?

So do not think you have to give up your own culture in order to meet someone else's definition of being "civilized." Some of these Western religions have been a part of some of the worst wars and most brutal carnage in world history. And so many are divided into numerous sects, like the Catholics and the Baptists, all of which fight among themselves for converts. This should make you ask, how can unity come from such disunity? How can social harmony come from such disharmony? How is this a sign of advanced civilization?

So do not give up your culture or feel that you must convert to some other religion. Do not be tempted to think that your ways are backward. As my own spiritual master, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami would say, and as Vivekananda has also said, we only need to combine the Western technology with the Eastern philosophy. This is what helps makes for a progressive society. Develop yourself on all levels, the material and the spiritual. Simply broaden your education. You do not have to give up your culture or spiritual path to do that. Merely learn and keep up with the modern developments in the world, and use the latest technology when it is applicable to further enhance your development in your economy, ecology, agriculture, transportation, communication systems, construction of roads, and in your health systems. But there is no need to become so influenced by it that you should feel that you need to give up your own culture, your own values, or your own spiritual practices in the name of progress.

So what should you do??

SOLUTIONS

1. Practice your own culture and spiritual path. Be proud of what it offers.

2. Learn it deeply. Stay familiar with your traditions, rituals, and holy days, and pass it along to the youth.

3. Make sure the traditions and stories are recorded in books so they can be studied, remembered, practiced, and handed down through the generations.

4. Compile the books of prayers, songs, and stories, and with translations, make them available to everyone.

5. Make the proper and benevolent images to worship where and when it is helpful.

6. Construct centers for prayer, worship, and practice. Such centers are the basis of preserving the culture and offering education in them.

7. Congregate together regularly, and be supportive toward one another.

8. Celebrate and enjoy your festivals, and know and discuss the meaning of them so they are not lost, and be willing to share the beauty and joy of them with all others.

9. In a friendly way, encourage others you know to participate as the basis of a united community.

10. Recognize the need to be pro-active in working to keep your culture. Join or form the organizations that help you preserve and protect your culture.

11. Establish the means or campaign that will assist people to realize the value of their own spiritual heritage.

12. Form political action committees to (A) make sure politicians are aware of your issues, (B) to make sure that they are representing you properly, and (C) to unite voters to bring in a better political representative for the indigenous culture or vote out those who are ineffective.

13. A group should be established in every town and village, if possible, to encourage people in this way.

14. Come together in groups regularly to participate in and discuss your culture, and develop the ways of defending it, especially when it is under attack or threatened by conversion groups who are under a foreign influence.

15. Also recognize the need for true harmony and unity, and know that a true religion or spiritual path does not create disharmony by

dividing people into the "sinners" and the "saved" simply because of following different religions or spiritual traditions.

16. There must also be the maturity to balance the old traditions with any new modifications.

17. Unite with other organizations, groups, or village tribes who have similar interests and concerns for cultural preservation, and share information and support with other groups.

18. Start your own schools. Write or compile teacher's guide books on ways to teach children and others the culture. In this way, the culture will more likely be preserved and passed down through the generations.

19. Work on ways for economic self-sufficiency to be free from the need of support from organizations or religions that actually disdain your own original culture.

20. Followers of Vedic Dharma, Hindus, must be ready and willing to stand up and distribute knowledge to overcome misconceptions, false media reports, the false history of India, and any social or religious injustices that take place toward its people.

21. All foreigners who enter India, especially under a tourist visa, and are seen to be engaged in converting people from their own culture, traditions, and religions, which is illegal in India, must be reported to the government or other groups who will do something about this.

22. Know how to work within the legal system and do not be afraid to take organizations and people to court in order to resolve issues, or delay their activities of denigrating and distorting the truth of your own culture. Bring in lawyers who are willing to help you and who share your concern.

23. Approach the wealthy who will help contribute to do something about these wrongs, and assist in various projects to facilitate the spiritual development of all Sanatana-dharmists and people everywhere.

24. Acharyas must also reach out to the villagers and tribals to show them welcome into the Vedic family, and that they are respected as members of the Global Vedic Community.

25. Encourage all Hindus to participate in politics as a vote bank to oust the politicians who improperly represent the Hindu/Vedic community, and to vote in and support those political leaders who will. This must never be taken for granted. Also, learn how to run for office and get involved in politicis to better defend your culture and bring particular issues to the fore.

26. Report or write to newspapers immediately when errors or unfairness or discrimination appear in their reports. Also, learn to write to the editor on these issues, some of which may get published to offer a different view.

27. When the government or politicians provide laws that favor minorities, or add holidays to the calendar year at the expense of the majority population in India, or refuse to recognize the holidays or traditions of the growing Indian community in countries outside India, then act in ways that will show support for your view and cause in order to make the government realize the importance to change what it is doing, and to provide more support for your own community. Be ready and willing to take such cases to court if necessary.

28. Learn to use and control the media to defend against any misconceptions of Vedic culture. Be ready and learn how to establish radio stations, or radio and television shows and programs to broadcast what is of interest to the community, along with spiritual knowledge that is of interest to everyone. You may be surprised at how many people become regular listeners, or how you become the connection between people and the Vedic tradition. This is a strong way to present correct conceptions and understanding of the Vedic culture, or keep people informed regarding what is actually happening in the district.

29. All Hindus and people of indigenous cultures must become more united in this way, and show their unity. They must also take a stand on important issues together, such as the Rama Sethu issue and others. I have often said, if the Hindus or Sanatana-dharmists could ever really unite, they would be a force that could change the world, and keep India as the homeland of a dynamic and thriving Vedic tradition. Remember, that the Global Vedic Community represents one billion people. That is no small number.

30. Hindus, Sanatana-dharmists, or Vedic devotees must be proud to be what they are. They should not feel afraid or embarrassed to be Hindu, or from India, and must be able to defend their culture and correct misconceptions that other people may have. They must become a collective voice of one billion strong and join in the Global Vedic Community.

31. They can also participate in community activities, and open their temples to the increasing number of Westerners who are curious and interested in the Vedic culture and its traditions. The Vedic community is looking for support and new participants, and the West is the biggest marketplace for their culture than anywhere else right now. So, why not work together to provide enhanced spiritual knowledge for

everyone? If we want *punya* or spiritual credit, there is no way of getting it faster than assisting others in their spiritual development. So, what are you waiting for?

32. Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) must also do their part to preserve, protect, and promote the true understanding of Vedic Dharma, especially in India, and contribute toward the well-being of India's future. They must also help support those who are working in a similar way, such as writers, lecturers, or Swamis who can help create awareness of current issues and find resolutions for them, and help wake up Hindus of India to become pro-active for the protection of Vedic Dharma. It is not enough simply to work for enlightenment, but NRIs most also help to preserve the freedom so that we can continue to follow the path of enlightenment without obstacles.

If Hindus can work together in this way, this can certainly and quickly change the view and the support the world will have toward Hindus at large.

India's civilization is the oldest in the world. It has withstood the test of time when others have crumbled. It has weathered the onslaught of many foreign invaders and has still retained its religious and spiritual values, along with its original customs and traditions, which are unique in nature. It is the Eastern culture which has shown itself to be the most respectful and tolerant, allowing all forms of deities and spiritual paths to remain, and permitting the expression of every form of spirituality. It has given liberty of individual thought as the ultimate freedom, which other tyrannical civilizations have denounced, which has also brought about their own demise. Therefore, you have every reason to value what you already have and continue practicing it.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Vedic Culture: As Relevant Today as Ever

We should all understand that by investigating the knowledge and viewpoints in the many topics found in Vedic culture, the practice and utilization of this Vedic knowledge can indeed assist us in many ways. Furthermore, in regard to all the trouble we presently find in this world, maybe it is time to look at things through a different and deeper view to find the answers and directions that are so needed. The knowledge and understandings of this great Vedic tradition may indeed be what will help us see through the fog of confusion that seems to envelope so much of society.

What we find in Vedic knowledge are areas of study, progress, and expression that are as relevant today for human advancement as they were hundreds or thousands of years ago. India and its Vedic culture has contributed much to the world, such as its music, beautiful forms of art and architecture, martial arts, astronomy, holistic medicine in Ayurveda, and the mathematical system based on the number ten, along with its yoga and philosophy. In the United States, yoga has exploded into a three billion dollar industry. A recent survey (at the time of this writing in 2005) showed that 16.5 million people are practicing yoga, or 7.5 percent of the United States. Also, the Yoga Journal magazine has grown from a circulation of 90,000 in 1998, to 170,000 in 2000, to 325,000 in 2005.

Vedic mathematics is another example of its contribution to world progress. It is an ancient development that continues to play an important part in modern society. Without the advancements in math that had been established by Vedic culture as far back as 2500 BCE and passed along to others, such as the Greeks and Romans, we would not have many of the developments and inventions that we enjoy today. The Greek alphabet, for example, was a great hindrance to calculating. The Egyptians also did not have a numerical system suitable for large calculations. For the number 986 they had to use 23 symbols. Even the Romans were also in want of a system of mathematical calculations.

Only after they adopted the Indian system that was called Arabic numerals did they find what they needed. Weights and measures and scales with decimal divisions had been found from that period which were quite accurate.

The difference was that Vedic mathematics had developed the system of tens, hundreds, thousands, etc., and the basis of carrying the remainder of one column of numbers over to the next. This made for easy calculations of large numbers that was nearly impossible in other systems, as found with the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and even Chinese. The Vedic system had also invented the zero, which has been called one of the greatest developments in the history of mathematics.

The numeral script from India is said to have evolved from the Brahmi numerals. This spread to Arabia through traders and merchants, and from there up into Europe and elsewhere. It became known as the Arabic numerals, yet the Arabians had called them "Indian figures" (*Al-Arqan-Al-Hindu*) and the system of math was known as *hindisat*, or the Indian art.

Vedic culture already had an established mathematical system that had been recorded in the *Shulba Sutras*. These are known to date back to the 8th century BCE. The name *Shulba Sutras* meant "codes of rope." This was because such calculations were used for measuring precise distances for altars and temple structures by using lengths of rope.

The *Shulba Sutras* were actually a portion of a larger text on mathematics known as the *Kalpa Sutras*. These and the Vedic mathematicians were recognized for their developments in arithmetic and algebra. Indians were the first to use letters of the alphabet to represent unknowns. But they were especially known for what they could do in geometry. In fact, geometrical instruments had been found in the Indus Valley dating back to 2500 BCE. Furthermore, what became known as the Pythagorean theorem was already existing in the *Baudhayana*, the earliest of the *Shulba Sutras* before the 8th century BCE. This was presented by Pythagoras around 540 BCE after he discovered it in his travels to India. So this shows the advanced nature of the Vedic civilization.

After the *Shulba Sutras*, Vedic mathematics enjoyed further development in the field of Jyotish, Vedic astronomy, which used all forms of math. Indian mathematicians continued creating systems that were not known in Europe until much later in the Renaissance period. For example, Aryabhatta in the 5th century introduced sines and versed sines, and is credited as the inventor of algebra. He is said to be the first

to state that the Earth travels around the sun. However, the ancient Vedic texts have described this many years earlier, which shows the wisdom of the early Vedic seers.

Aryabhatta was followed by Brahmagupta (7th century) who was the great mathematician that especially developed the use of zero and was the first to use algebra to solve problems in astronomy. Next was Mahavira (9th century) who made great strides in the use of fractions and figuring out how to divide one fraction by another. Then there was Bhaskara (12th century) who made progress in spherical trigonometry and principles of calculus before Newton by 500 years. He used it to determine the daily motion of planets.

The Vedic system of math, as explained in the *sutras*, also reduced the number of steps in calculations to merely a few that otherwise required many steps by conventional methods. Thus, this ancient science is still worthy of study today.

In 600 BCE, **Sushruta** recorded complicated surgeries like cesareans, cataract, artificial limbs, fractures, urinary stones, and even plastic surgery and brain surgery. Usage of anesthesia was well known in ancient India. Over 125 surgical instruments were used. Deep knowledge of anatomy, physiology, etiology, embryology, digestion, metabolism, genetics, and immunity is also found in many texts.

A well-developed medical system was in existence by the 1st century CE. Progress in medicine led to developments in chemistry and the production of medicine, alkaline substances, and glass. Colorfast dies and paints were developed to remain in good condition over the centuries. The paintings in the caves of Ajanta are a testimony to this.

Vedic art is another ancient development that still holds much appreciation in modern times. Art in the Vedic tradition was never a mere representation of an artist's imagination. It was always a vehicle to convey higher truths and principles, levels of reality that may exist beyond our sense perception. It was always used to bring us to a higher purpose of existence and awareness. In this way, it was always sacred and beheld the sacred. Still today it is used to allow others to enter into a transcendental experience. It may also present the devotional objects of our meditation.

Vedic paintings or symbols are unique in that they can deliver the same spiritual energy, vibration, and insight that it represents. In other words, through the meditation and devotional mood of the artist, the art becomes a manifestation of the higher reality. In this way, the painting or symbol becomes the doorway to the spiritual essence contained within. They are like windows into the spiritual world.

Through that window we can have the experience of *darshan* of the Divine or divinities, God or His associates. *Darshan* is not merely seeing the Divine but it is also entering into the exchange of seeing and being seen by the Divine.

Thus, the art, or the deity, is beyond mundane principles or ingredients, such as paint, paper, stone, or metal with which it may be made, but it becomes completely spiritual through which the deity can reveal Himself or Herself. Thus, the truth of spiritual reality can pierce through the darkness of the material energy and enter our mind and illuminate our consciousness.

To convey higher realities in paintings and sculpture, everything has a meaning. The postures, gestures, colors, instruments or weapons, everything conveys a principle or purpose, which often must be explained to those who lack understanding. Thus, knowing the inner meaning of the painting increases its depth for those who can perceive it, which makes it worthy of further meditation and contemplation.

As with art, dance in India was not merely an expression of an artist's emotional mindset or imagination, but was meant to be an interpretation or conveyance of higher spiritual principles or pastimes of the Divine. In fact, in the Vedic pantheon Shiva is known as Nataraja, the king of dancers. Shiva's dance was also not without a more significant purpose. His dance was based on the rhythm of cosmic energy that pervades the universe, and the destruction of the illusory energy by which all souls are given the opportunity for release from the illusion to attain liberation, or *moksha*.

In this way, traditional Indian dance is highly spiritual and often accompanies important religious rituals and holy days and festivals. Vedic dance goes back to prehistoric times. Bharata Muni wrote his *Natya Shastra*, science of drama and dance, over 2000 years ago. In it he explains that it was Lord Brahma, the secondary engineer of the universal creation, who brought dance (*natya*) and drama to the people of Earth millions of years ago, shortly after the Earth was created.

Now dance has evolved into a tradition involving various schools and styles but with strict discipline. It is not uncommon that Indian families will have their daughters spend at least several years or more in such study and practice. There is a precise method of postures, facial and hand gestures (*mudras*), and movements, along with footwork that must be learned and synchronized to the beat and music in order to convey specific meanings, moods, and stories to the audience. Many temples, especially in South India, were known for maintaining large groups of dancers that performed at festivals and religious functions.

When the dance is performed according to the spiritual standards, which some view as similar to the practice of yoga, even the dancers can invoke a high degree of spirituality in their own consciousness and bring unity between their inner selves and God. Then the transcendental atmosphere can manifest and draw the Divine to appear in the performers on stage. Thus, the environment becomes transformed and the audience may also experience *darshan* of the Divine and experience an inspiring upliftment in their own consciousness. In this way, the dance is divine beauty in motion. Or it is a way of invoking the spiritual dimension into our midst. Few other forms of dance attempt to do this.

Various schools of dance include Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Orissi, Kathak, Mohini Atam, Krishna Atam, Bhagavata Mela, etc. Thus, we may have many dances that convey stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, or Krishna-lila from the *Bhagavata Purana*. Nowadays this ancient art of Indian dance is enjoying a wide audience and a prominent place on the international stage.

Presently, other forms of Vedic sciences that are again increasing in popularity include Ayurveda, the Vedic system of holistic medicine that originated back between the 6^{th} -10^{th} century BCE. It is the knowledge of healthy living and the treatment of diseases. It is that ancient art and science that helps us understand this very 'life' with all its different shades and colors; understand how best we can undertake this journey; and how we transition through its different phases, from teenage, to adulthood, to maturity, etc., in the best shape possible.

Jyotish is the Vedic form of astrology, which is an ancient science and is also being accepted and gaining popularity in the West. Vedic Astrology is meant to help the individual better find his or her way through life. It is to assist in discovering one's highest proclivities, personality, character, qualities, and traits and what may be one's best direction for a career, and other things. Thus, a person will least likely waste one's time in unfulfilling activities, professions, or pursuits.

Gemology is an important field in today's market. But when we speak of Vedic gemology, we do not mean that it is merely for judging the value of a gem. The Vedic purpose in gemology is to determine the best type of quality gem for a person to wear. Thus, Vedic gemology works in conjunction with Ayurveda and Jyotish to establish the best gem a person should wear for health and positive influence.

Vãstu is the Vedic science of architectural and home arrangement. It made its way through the orient and became known as Feng Shui, which has made particular progress in popularity in the West.

However, Vãstu is a particular science that deals with the flow of energy through a house or building for the highest benefits. It is not enough to merely arrange a house so it looks nice or that there is a good flow of energy through it. But there is much that depends on the directions in which things are facing or which parts of the building in which certain activities are performed.

Of course, such things as Pranayama, meditation, and yoga have been used for thousands of years and are also gaining interest in Western countries. What accompanies this is also the Eastern philosophy that has always been a prominent part of what people use to help find themselves and reach a higher degree of spiritual development.

So, as we can see, Vedic culture and its many areas of knowledge and devotional expression are still as relevant today as they have been thousands of years ago. And humanity can benefit from them by introspection and in spiritual as well as material development as it did in the past.

The power of the Dharma and the relevancy of Vedic culture are found in the number of tools it has always provided in order for humanity to reach its fullest potentials, both as individuals who are searching for their own fulfillment and spiritual awakening, and as a society that can function in harmony with nature and cooperation amongst themselves.

So here we can see how various aspects of the ancient Vedic culture are still applicable today and can provide assistance in our attempts to reach our highest potential, both materially and spiritually. This is the constant and higher nature of the power of the dharma that can be recognized and utilized generation after generation. By investigating the knowledge and viewpoints in the many topics found in the Vedic tradition we can certainly see that the practice and utilization of this Vedic knowledge can indeed assist us in many ways.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Giving Vedic Culture to the Next Generation

When I was growing up as a teenager and became interested in the Vedic teachings, I had to research it on my own. I was not like the Indian youth who naturally grow up with it in their own families, and who may also take it for granted as if it is nothing special, but only something that their grandparents or parents do. I had to struggle and almost fight to acquire access to the books and information I needed. There was so little around where I grew up. In other words, there was no way I was going to take this Vedic knowledge cheaply once I got it.

The fact of the matter is that I was raised in a Christian family, which was nice, but gradually I was not totally satisfied with the spiritual teachings within the faith. I had more questions about life than it had answers. I found it rather shallow and wanted something deeper. So I looked at all kinds of religions and spiritual teachings, but with the question that is typical of most Westerners when growing up, "What is in it for me?" Plus, "How is it going to help me, and which spiritual path is going to do the most for me? How can it make a difference to my growth and understanding." This is a basic attitude of most Westerners and is spreading to most of the youth around the world.

With that premise as the basis of my exploration, when I finally arrived at the Vedic tradition, I was convinced of the depth of its spiritual knowledge and its comprehensiveness, but from the view of "What's in it for me?" Because of having this background, typical of American teenagers, I can also understand the position of other young people today, especially those of Indian descent, who may be asking the same questions regarding their own culture. Therefore, if they do not get the right answers to their questions, or the proper guidance to understand the purpose and meaning of its philosophy and practices, it will not make enough sense for them to seriously take up the path or fully accept it. Therefore, I realize how important it is to teach them correctly, and in a way in which they will find interest in it.

Indian youngsters of today have adopted the American or Western approach to accepting their parent's tradition, which is called "What's in it for me?" In other words, if they do not understand something, or if they cannot relate to it, or if it makes no sense or seems to have little relevancy to their lives, they will not take it. Gone are the days when sons and daughters accept something mainly because their parents or grandparents did. Now they have to be able to see the purpose of it. They need to understand the meaning and usefulness behind the tradition.

This is not only the way the next generation of Indians and Hindus are viewing things in America, but I have seen this same attitude in the youth in India as well. This is also happening in other cultures, too. So, this is a challenge to the parents everywhere. But in some ways this is good because if the children really understand the customs and traditions, if they are truly educated in the meaning of them, then if they embrace them they will sincerely follow them for life.

So, it is up to the parents, teachers, and gurus to find the ways in which the Indian youth of today can understand and learn about the customs and history of the Vedic tradition in a way that makes sense to them. They cannot be bored with it. It has to have meaning and be relevant to their lives. They cannot see it merely as myths, but as history. They should not see it as mere rituals, but as ceremonies and practices that uplift and purify the consciousness. They need to recognize the benefits of it. They should not see the images in the temple as mere idols, but as deities that can reciprocate with the devotee to the degree of sincerity and surrender in which the devotee approaches the deity. They need to see that Vedic culture is a dynamic and living tradition that holds eternal spiritual truths that are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. They need to see that many of the technological advancements that we take for granted today are made possible by many of the developments that had been given by the ancient Vedic tradition.

The youth of today cannot be pushed or forced into something. You simply bring them to the temple, even if at times they do not want to go, and let them go to the classes and be with children of their own age group. Soon they will begin to have fun and will sometimes become more attracted to go to the temple than their parents. They need to be introduced to the Vedic tradition through methods that involve their own interests, whether it is technology and computers, or whether it is through ways of self-expression like music, dance, art, or even martial arts. All of these avenues have strong roots in the Vedic tradition and

were used in ways of discipline that would also lead one to higher awareness and refined realizations.

We need to make the youth aware of the possibilities that can be attained or learned from the ancient Vedic tradition as it is applied to the modern age. I recently got a letter from South Africa in which they explained how they were using an approach from an article I wrote on how various frequencies can allow a person to kill, heal, or transcend. I explained in it that the numerous frequencies which exist around us can affect us in various ways, both beneficially and destructively. It also showed how Russians had been broadcasting radio frequencies that could control behavioral patterns in people or even kill them, as well as how the ancients of Vedic culture used the sound vibrations in mantras to perceive and reach the spiritual strata and change social cooperation for the better.

When this was presented to the youth in a class, no one was bored, but they could see how ancient knowledge could be applied for purposes that could be used today. In this way, children that displayed no interest in spirituality suddenly had their curiosity piqued. So we need to know how to develop these kinds of methods.

Furthermore, Hindu temples, being the center of cultural preservation, also need to find the ways for the youth to get involved in all age levels. Even if it is only through association with other youngsters for fun, games, and youthful activities like camping, boating, swimming, musical sing-alongs, etc., that can be incorporated to bring them together. Then stories of the ancient histories can be told wherein they learn moral values and also the characters and traits of the Vedic personalities, both old and contemporary. This can be done in a way that can also explain the history of India and its development. Or they can learn songs and bhajans as played with modern instruments like guitars and electric keyboards. The point is to use any avenue in which their interest can be aroused. It also has to be fun.

Thereafter, classes that teach the more orthodox ways of the culture can also be introduced, such as the traditional forms of dance, art, yoga, and philosophy with a modern bent to it. By this I mean how it has influenced great thinkers of the West, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and others. Or how in America yoga has become a three billion dollar business that now has over 16 million people who practice it. Plus, we can show them how Westerners and people all over the world are adopting such views as reincarnation and karma, which are thoroughly rooted in the Vedic tradition. In essence, the youth should feel proud of

their culture, its global acceptance, and how it is providing upliftment for increasing numbers of people.

So how best can we relate to our children? Using the approach of emotion or entertainment is one way. Whenever children become bored with something, such as too much philosophy or intellectualism, what do they usually do? They go relate with their friends, or put on some music in their Ipod, play competitive sports, or something like that. Thus, they go and engage in one of the most basic activities that there are, which are things on the emotional level. So we need to perceive that. Find out what activities they would like to do in the temple. Or what areas of interest in their tradition do they have. Do they have interest in the heroes or freedom fighters of India? Chances are the children do not even know of them. But many of the boys would certainly have their interest piqued if they began to hear the stories and adventures about the heroes in the Puranic epics, or the more modern heroes during India's efforts for independence. These would include the struggles, fights, challenges, sacrifices, all for the improvement of society and the people of India. There are also many strong women in Indian history who have worked and even fought in such a way, which could then also be of interest and provide inspiration to the girls. So, we have to open ourselves up and find out how else to reach our children.

Many of these ways of teaching and numerous other techniques are already being done quite successfully, but they need to be set up and documented in a way in which they can be duplicated by others who are also in need of them. When a solution is found, when there is something that works, it should be made available through the proper channels to others who could also use it. There are some networks and email groups for this purpose already functioning, but they need to increase their exposure and cooperation with other Hindu organizations. This lack of cooperation between various groups and sects is indeed a prime issue in the global Hindu community.

Another point is that if parents are going to convey Vedic culture and Dharma to their children, then the parents also must know what to say and how to explain things properly to them. And if they do not know how, then they need to learn. It is not enough to merely send the children off to someone else to get the necessary information and guidance. The parents, being our first teachers, must also be exemplary, enthusiastic, and provide the proper instructions. They must be educated in their own culture so they can explain it to their children, and also use it as the basis of their actions. Otherwise, how will the children understand the purpose of the ceremonies, or the holidays and customs that are observed? And if

this is the case, why would it make sense to the children to adopt the Vedic standards and traditions when the answers to the primary question "What is in it for me?" has not been answered. And how inspiring would it be when it seems that their own parents do not know the purpose behind the traditions, or do not take them seriously?

On the other hand, when the parents regularly bring their young children to the temple and they join together with other families and youngsters to joyously observe the eventful holidays, or the colorful worship or special classes, it can create fond memories in the minds of the children that will last their whole lives. They remember their family taking special care and lovingly doing such things together, and devotedly going to the temple for special observances, and the uplifting feeling they would get from that. These are like *samskaras* or impressions which create memories that can motivate the children to continue partaking in such aspects of the Vedic Hindu traditions long after they reach adulthood. And then they partake of the same traditions and observances with their own children.

In essence, the youth of today have to know that the practice of the Vedic tradition is going to improve and enhance their life. They have to know how it is going to help them reach their higher potential in today's world, both materially and spiritually, and how it is going to give them the fulfillment that everyone is looking for. And we have to provide those answers and insights to them in some way or other.

Even if the children engage in less activity at school, such as in sports or various social clubs, there can be an increase in the time they have for learning about their Indian heritage and culture. After all, Sanatana-dharma is not only the root of the identity of children of Indian descent, but it is the foundation for the balance and guidance and their character that everyone can use throughout life. Children may learn all about and play baseball, basketball, or other social and sports activities, but how much will they really use such things later on? So, what is the loss in learning about the traditions and heritage of India, except in not learning it at all? That would be the greatest loss.

By training our children in the principles of Santana-dharma, they also learn about the greatness of the Indian identity. Thus, if they have a difficult time in figuring out whether they are American or Indian, especially if they are Indian-born but now being raised in America, this would help them understand their great and distinguishing ethnic identity. They may still relate to things in the West, but understanding their heritage, especially the universal, spiritual standards of Sanatana-dharma, will help them have a balanced view of life and their real

uniqueness than anything else. It would become the foundation of who they are, and also provide the wisdom for the decisions that they make long after they have left school.

It has been said that if you ever want to destroy a generation, or create the demise of a culture, then cause a distancing between the youth and their previous generations. Then in time, the previous traditions will be forgotten and will cease to exist. Therefore, it is imperative that temples need *Balavihars*, or a school or special programs to train all children in the ways and meaning of the Vedic tradition.

They can also engage in fun mock debates on various points of the Vedic culture in group discussions on why certain things are done in the temple, or on certain aspects of the philosophy and knowledge about the Vedic epics. This way they can understand, remember, and even defend their culture and be proud of following Sanatana-dharma. This can help remove any misconception that they have. There may be a time when they know more than their parents.

As the youth become more enthusiastic and develop with age, they can also become united through networks that join with other youth groups from various *mandirs* and temples from across the country. Then they can also plan great festivals and get-togethers with a large number of other youth for engagement in all kinds of fun activities, culturally oriented traditions, discussions on life and challenges, resolutions to develop for the future of their culture, and so on. The youth can also share the experiences with each other that they have on the spiritual path. Everyone wants to be on a winning team, and when other youth from the same background see how they are assisting, encouraging, and relating to each other in a positive and exciting way, more of the youth will want to join. When they have the enthusiasm and independence to progress in this way on their own, there will be no stopping them. They will also become the inspiration for future generations.

MONITORING AND REVIEWING CHILDREN'S SCHOOL BOOKS

Often times we see that in elementary schools, high schools and even colleges, the text books they use have unbalanced or inaccurate coverage when it comes to their section on Hinduism or the Vedic tradition. Sometimes they provide what are really negative descriptions of the Vedic values and incorrect views of the origin of Indian culture and society. Even the vocabulary that is used can often provide a slant

that is derogatory. Thus, students are educated with a wrong impression of Vedic culture, and Indian students can become embarrassed by it and then prefer to disassociate themselves from it rather than face ridicule from their peers. This is unacceptable.

Therefore, a great need exists to monitor such textbooks and either provide the proper information, or make sure that incorrect information is not published in these books. Some of the ways to do this is to become members of the school Board of Education. This will help position yourself and others to better monitor such books, help choose which books to use, make sure that books that are chosen can be reviewed or even changed if they are inaccurate, and help see to it that schools offer the proper introductions about Vedic culture to the students in the classes.

When working from outside the educational system, make sure you thoroughly understand the Board of Education's system and work within it. Bring in committed members from the local temples and Hindu community to help work on this. Join forces with others across the country who have also worked on this. More people will add influence.

These books usually come up for review every several years, which can give you the opportunity to prepare for editing, changes that should be made, or new books to be selected for the school. So this is the chance to make a difference. When doing this, work professionally, be personal, be persistent but polite, be politically correct, and people-oriented. Always avoid conflict with board members. Prepare an easy to read and unambiguous table clearly showing how Hinduism and India are covered in CF (Curriculum Framework) and SoL (Standards of Learning) when compared to Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism to the Board of Education, and provide any suggestions for changes. Comparisons can include origin, beliefs, traditions and customs, social structure, along with how they spread and developed, and any contributions made to society. Such comparisons can make whatever biases, unequal treatment, ignorance, and discrimination indisputably evident. This will provide the impetus for action to be taken for making changes in the textbooks. Once this is established, the next step is to make the proper information available to include in the new textbook editions.

This whole process often takes time, so be patient and do not give up, and if some changes are establishedin the books or curriculum, be thankful for a partial success, and be willing to continue working on this to make further changes or corrections the next time the books go up for editing and review.

Another thing that can be done is to review and make a list of acceptable books that can be included at your local temple, temple gift shop, or its library. In this way, children can be exposed to the proper information and parents can purchase recommeneded books to have at home to help educate their children in the Vedic tradition properly, even if you cannot depend on the school to do so. This should be done for any family anyway. There is no better way of learning one's spiritual heritage than at home and in one's own community, and by regular attendance at the temple.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Creating a Spiritual Revolution in India For Protecting the Vedic Heritage

FOCUSING ON THE VILLAGES

This is a step by step process for affecting the villages of India to become a part of the spiritual revolution that could be developed across the country. Why worry about the villages? The 2001 census showed that India's population has gone past the 1 billion mark. Nearly three-quarters of its population, 72.2 percent, live in its more than 500,000 villages, which are primarily dependent on agriculture. Its urban population of 285 million, 27.8 percent, is almost the equivalent of the total population of the United States. But we can see that a good majority of Indian people live in the villages.

The villagers are also very simple people, pious, and also the most vulnerable to the conversion tactics that are brought in by outside religions. This is also why Christian missionaries are increasingly preaching and working to build churches in the villages. And this is also why we should focus more on fulfilling the spiritual needs of villagers.

What follows are some effective methods to do this. These are not based on theories. These steps are already known to work. For example, one man I met, Mr. Rama Murti, had established temples in 120 villages with the use of the formula that I describe herein. Others, such as Kamal Kumar Swami, has gone on a six month Padayatra through hundreds of villages and towns that culminated in a massive rally at Tirupati that brought together 10,000 people to get them involved and connected with the Vedic tradition, and also protest the government takeover and control of some 32,000 Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh. This method can work in many other places around India as well.

The steps include:

1. Ways of reaching out to the villages.
2. Doing Padayatras by Swamis and Acharyas
3. Organizing and teaching villagers
4. Building little temples in each village
5. Establishing an open-door policy of sharing culture and traditions
6. Providing spiritual education and practice

ADDITIONAL POINTS

7. Book distribution
8. Retraining for temple priests in the villages
9. Providing assistance for medical concerns
10. Rallies for people to protest government's ill-actions
11. Follow-up actions and organizing villages

WAYS OF REACHING OUT TO THE VILLAGES DOING PADAYATRAS BY SWAMIS AND ACHARYAS

The prime way of reaching out to the majority of people, which are the ones living in the villages, is through:

A. Visiting the villages in a friendly way to enhance the spiritual culture of the people, and to see if they want to become more connected with the Vedic tradition, and to encourage them in the ways to do so.

B. Visits and presentations by local Swamis and Acharyas who hold group programs wherein the community can participate.

C. Padayatras (tours or pilgrimages done on foot) performed by the local Swamis and Acharyas who travel with other devotees or followers through the village, and where they stop and hold community programs.

Otherwise, if the Swamis and Acharyas only stay in their temples, ashramas, and *mathas*, waiting for people to come to them, then they are only 50% effective. Swamis must engage in outreach programs wherein they go to the places of the people in order to show that they care about the villagers and want them to feel a part of the spiritual tradition of India. Such Padayatras can be done in a simple way such as in small groups on foot, or even more elaborately with bulls pulling carts

with deities for *puja*, and booklets and flyers in the local language to hand out, or even with an elephant, etc. Or even with vehicles and trucks with supplies. This way it appears like a festival is arriving. However, villagers will also appreciate the intimate feeling of a small group as well.

The programs held in the villages by the Acharyas and Swamis should be very simple. Villagers often are not so educated, and few may know how to read, though this is changing. So, we have to take this into consideration. Therefore, depending on the distribution of books or literature may not always be so effective in such places, though it is worth using when possible. But the villagers are often very sincere and easily impressed. Thus, the program can consist of starting with prayers and mantras, then telling stories from the *Puranas*, *Ramayana*, or *Mahabharata* about the importance and value of worshiping God and the deity, which the people can easily understand. Such stories can also help show the significance of the tradition, and that devotees can experience a relationship with the deity—God or Goddess. Other stories of miracles or reciprocation between the devotee and God or the deity can be expressed as well since such occurrences often begin to take place when a person starts to establish a strong relationship with the deity.

The arrangement for a program can be simple, as in everyone sitting outside together in a nice area, or in someone's house if it is a small group. Or a *pandal* tent can be set up to make it more elaborate. If it is a bigger arrangement, the tent can even have a stage with a sound system. Then a more impressive and festive atmosphere can be invoked, however the intimacy between the Swami and the people should not be hampered. Such a Padayatra and *pandal* program had been done several years ago by Iskcon when their Padayatra went all around India, and it was very successful. This kind of Padayatra and festival program should be constantly going on across India.

During the program, however simple or elaborate it may be, there can be *bhajans* of devotional songs, especially *harinams*—group chanting of the holy names of God, followed by *puja* (worship) and an *arati* ceremony, ending with *prasada* (food sanctified or offered to the deities) distributed by the visiting Swami or devotees. *Prasada* can either be brought to the village, or the ingredients can be arranged to be cooked with the assistance of some of the villagers, and then distributed after it is offered to the deity. It is especially nice if it is the Swami who distributes or gives out the *prasada* to the villagers. This makes it all the more impressive.

This leads to a most reciprocal and respectful atmosphere, and an arrangement for long-term relations and dedication in these villagers toward the visiting Swami and devotees. The villagers can also invite other local people to attend such functions or programs to make it a larger gathering, with everyone coming to their local temple, if there is one, or some other location such as a large *pandal* tent.

Acharyas and Swamis going to the villages would create great respect for themselves amongst the villagers, and show their sincere caring and desires to reach out to the people. This is what the Swamis are supposed to do anyway, but many have discontinued doing this, or do it very little. And this creates an impression that the Swamis no longer care, or that the villagers are not valued. Then when someone else does come to the village, such as missionaries, the villagers become impressed by that gesture, thinking that at least someone does care about them, which also makes them more susceptible to listen to whatever other message is brought to them, even when it is a deliberate attack on their own culture and tradition.

The Padayatra could be a program that is done 2 months out of the year, or through an area that would be in a 10, 20, or 30 kilometer radius out from the Swami's ashrama, or through a particular route, or up to the boundaries of another Acharya's area of jurisdiction, if such other Swamis were also engaged in this kind of program. Or it could be done for longer periods to cover larger areas, such as the way Kamal Kumar Swami did it when traveling for six months.

This would connect the villagers in an endearing way to the Vedic culture of India. It would pull their hearts to the traditions and keep them from being susceptible to the forces and tricky ways of outsiders or missionaries. It would show that the authorities of the ancient traditions of Dharma do indeed care about them. It would also help stir the minds of villagers to vote for the right politician who is most likely to protect and respect their culture and the ways of India and its centers of preservation, such as its temples.

Another method that works to connect with the people is what the members of the Swadhyaya group uses, which is to go out every Ekadasi, twice a month, and meet with new people, families, and simply give them some association. Then discuss some *Bhagavad-gita*, invite them to the temple, or the larger gathering that takes place with others, and just be their friend. Then the families will appreciate the nice association and will want to associate with other similar people. This is the way to help others, provide honest friendship, and bring a higher level of purpose into their lives. And some of these members who do this

are college age students. This simple process has made the Swadhyaya group, centered around Mumbai, into a large worldwide organization.

Another way of reaching out is to hold youth camps for the children and teenagers. This needs to be planned out, and many adults will also be willing to participate and associate with each other, providing even stronger relations with one another. The youth can also learn more about their own culture in the atmosphere of other young friends. It is always nice when the children can make friends with other children in an environment where they can all learn about and practice their own culture. Many groups do this quite successfully. And Swamis visiting the villages that offer special attention to the youth in regard to helping teach them their culture makes for wonderful impressions on the children and everyone.

ORGANIZING AND TEACHING VILLAGERS

The next step is organizing and teaching the villagers. Many villages do not have their own temples, or are not organized to help themselves to protect their own culture. Therefore, first there is the need to find a village that is ready to be organized. How you do this is to:

A. Go into the village and talk to them about the culture of India and their participation in it. Naturally, they will be interested, but often do not know how to organize themselves or conduct programs. So you can have a program as previously described and cultivate their interest. This does not have to be elaborate.

B. Read to them stories from the *Puranas*, *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, something they may already be familiar with about their *ishta-devata*, whether it is Krishna, Vishnu, Rama, etc., and how important it is to worship such deities.

C. Then, if or when they are ready, bring in a deity to the village. The deity can be brought to someone's house, or let them take turns keeping it at their homes for a week at a time. This means that each family that will take a turn at keeping the deity will be taught the basic ways of taking care of the deity, and must promise to bathe before worshiping the deity and keep clean during worship, stay free from intoxicants, worship the deity at certain times of the day, learn what items to offer, and to abstain from smoking, eating meat, unnecessary criticism of others, etc., while the deity is in their home. The place where the deity is setup must also be kept clean and proper. They should

understand that it is a very special privilege to keep the deity, even if only for a week.

The people often become very attached to the deity and will wish the deity to stay with them longer before going on to the next family. Miracles and benefits are often noticed while the deity is with a family, the stories of which spread to other families who then also take a more lively interest. The whole family is affected in a positive way. Transformations in consciousness are not uncommon. Also, programs with other villagers can be held around the deity at the home where the deity is staying. Such programs can consist of *puja*, prayers, recitation of stories from the *Puranas*, group *kirtanas* and the singing of *bhajans* to the deity, group cooking for making an offering for the deity, and then *prasada* distribution after the food has been offered to the deity. The villagers often start to get accustomed and attracted to such events.

After a week with one family, the deity circulates to the next. In this way, from one family to another, this program creates attachment to the deity throughout the village. Eventually, when the village is ready, the deity can have a special structure for worship, on its own property or that of one of the villagers, which centralizes the spiritual activities of the village. Otherwise, if building a separate temple is not feasible, the villagers can continue to get together for regular programs of *kirtanas*, *bhajans*, *harinamas*, and *pujas* at various locations or homes.

BUILDING LITTLE TEMPLES IN EACH VILLAGE

The next step is building a temple for the deity in the village, if the villagers are ready for it. But at this point, the villagers must promise to never convert to another religion if we are going to undergo the endeavor to assist them in getting funds and material to build a temple for them. They must promise to always care for the deity. Only then we can help them build a small temple for the deity in their village. The temple should then become the center wherein the whole community can congregate together regularly and be supportive toward one another. It should also be a place where everyone can celebrate and enjoy the festivals, and know and discuss the meaning of them so the traditions are not lost or misunderstood. They should also be willing to share the beauty and joy of them with all others.

Now, collecting funds and gathering building supplies are necessary. As the temple is built and when it is finished, the temple

becomes the center of the community's spiritual activities and education, and the protection of the traditions.

Once the temple is built, the deity is installed in the sanctum and one person of the village is assigned to be the priest, *pujari*, and is trained in basic deity worship for the newly installed deity, and for assisting the community members in worship and ceremonies. He can advance and learn more as enabled. He is also supported by the community to do his service to the deity and temple. If someone can be initiated by a Swami or Acharya, so much the better. Or if someone from the main ashrama can be assigned by the Swami to stay with the temple, that is also good. But that is not always possible.

Building a temple is the final step in cultivating such villagers, but further and regular contact with them and encouragement must be maintained so they do not feel neglected or out of touch with the greater Vedic/Hindu society. This need is fulfilled by no better a process than regular visits by the nearest Swami or Acharya who should come to see them on a regular basis, say once every six months or so.

This process can also work in simply rebuilding an old temple that has been forgotten or fallen into misuse. A new temple can be built over the deity or temple remnants that remain. This rekindles the interest of the villagers. You can again train them to look after the temple.

Another way that has been used to connect the villagers to the Vedic tradition with the use of temples is this:

You get each interested villager to invite ten more people to come to the temple, or to wherever the program is to be held. Then you establish a time when everyone can come to greet a special envoy who will bring a holy lamp or flame from the local Swami or Acharya. This fire will be placed in the temple and will light the sacred lamp in the temple. Thereafter, the villagers respectfully accept it and vow to keep it lit and protected in their temple, and used for *pujas* and lighting other lamps, or incense and ghee wicks for *arati*, etc. This rekindles the interest and dedication to the holy Vedic path amongst the villagers. This is, of course, dependent that such villages already have a temple or holy site. However, I still feel that it would be better if the Swami or Acharya bring the holy fire himself. This is more significant and will create much more interest and bring a higher degree of dedication in the participants.

ESTABLISHING AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY OF SHARING CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

An additional step is to have an open-door policy of sharing the culture and tradition with all others. By this I mean anyone who shows genuine interest and sincerity to understand the Vedic tradition should not be excluded from participation in the temples. This also means that those villagers who may be considered of low rank or class should not be excluded from the temples. They should be allowed in to have *darshan* and observe and participate in the worship and programs.

Many people are naturally interested and looking for the deeper spiritual truths found in the Vedic philosophy. An open door policy only helps give the opportunity wherein we can further our learning and understanding and participation in it. Separating sincere souls from the temples and the culture is only a prescription for a slow extinction of the Hindu population, and certainly decreases the people who are members of our global Vedic community.

Naturally, if someone is only a critic and does not understand the Vedic tradition, and is not interested, then there is no reason for such a person to be allowed in the temple. But there are many sincere souls who have also been excluded, for no particular reason except status, rank, or birth. So, if we are going to increase the general Vedic/Hindu population, then all souls should be allowed to feel peace, shelter, a sense of welcome and connection to the tradition through the temples.

Another aspect of this is that if someone is a foreigner and is interested in visiting a temple, then they can sign a paper saying they have respect for the Vedic tradition, or is indeed a devotee or Hindu, and then be allowed to enter the temple. There should be no hindrance. But if the Hindu community feels they are an exclusive bunch that will allow only a few types of people to enter their temples, then gradually, over the following generations, they will all die out, along with the tradition. There is certainly no advantage in that.

On the other hand, if we want to increase our strength, politically or in other ways, there is greater power in numbers. The more people we allow to have a stronger connection with the Vedic culture, then the more strength we have to preserve the tradition. Plus, the more joyful the gatherings will be. This can also be seen in the power we will have to vote in the proper politicians and leaders who have greater respect for upholding the Vedic standards and temples, which are an historic part of India. When this happens, they will also be more concerned in upholding

and protecting the rights and traditions of their constituents, as any politician is when he is worried about votes.

VILLAGES AND CONVERSIONS

If people are worried about villagers and tribals converting to outside religions, then to stop such potential occurrences the temples merely need to open their doors to everyone and allow them to feel welcome, and that they have a place to be a part of the Vedic community. Then let them participate in the activities and traditions that are offered in the temple. It is high time that the Dharmic and Hindu community becomes united on every level. The Vedic tradition is so deep and profound that there is a place for anyone and everyone.

The idea that only certain classes or castes can participate has never been justified in the Vedic texts. Thus, such an idea is not a genuine part of the Vedic system, which is open to everyone. So let us properly follow the Vedic principles, which recognize everyone as a spiritual being, and a part of Sanatana-dharma. Actually, this is the point: Everyone is essentially spirit in nature and can revive their spiritual identity by proper instruction, which is fully provided in the Vedic spiritual knowledge. Thus, if someone is ready and willing to sincerely and respectfully participate in the Vedic temple traditions, but he or she is not allowed to because of some bodily distinction, or for being born in a different country, you are committing an offense against Dharma, if not God directly, for hindering that person's spiritual progress. For restricting someone's exposure to the Vedic path in such a way, if someone is sincerely ready to investigate and follow it, you will have to pay for that negative karma at some point in your own development for having failed to provide the means for that person's spiritual advancement. Thus, it also increases one's spiritual merit to help others with their spiritual progress. The more you help others, the more you help yourself, and you can feel the difference in your own spiritual advancement. The more that people are grounded in the profound spiritual knowledge that Vedic culture provides, then the more unlikely they will be to consider converting to some other religion.

This is what I mean when I say that over the long term, a cultural revolution is better than a militant revolution. It is the spread of the Vedic spiritual knowledge that can help people understand and maintain and be convinced of the importance of the Dharmic culture. This is actually what has kept the Indian people dedicated to the Vedic traditions

for so long, and it can continue to do so well into the future if we do our duty and promote the Vedic spiritual knowledge and welcome anyone and everyone to participate.

PROVIDING SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

In providing spiritual education for people, especially in larger temples in the towns and cities, it is absolutely necessary that temples provide regular discourses and classes on a weekly or daily basis so people can increase their ability to understand and be conversant in the philosophy. Iskcon temples do this regularly, such as with morning classes and the weekly Sunday program wherein the whole congregation can gather together as a community for *arati*, *puja*, group *kirtans*, and class. Otherwise, Hinduism/Vedic culture tends to be most individualistic, and people come and go to the temples at various times throughout the day without much interaction with others. And this often goes on with little means of providing ongoing educational facility for the community regarding the philosophy. This is especially important in the villages where people may not know the intricacies of the philosophy, thus leaving them unaware of how profound it is. Of course, local Swamis should be at the center of this, but if they cannot be there to give class, or if the temple has no Swami, then CDs can be recorded and sold, along with books and booklets for individual hearing and study, to be used in classes. If Swamis are not available, then those who are also educated in the culture can provide such discourses, which is the usual case.

The point is that bringing the community together for regular classes or *kathas* is an added and necessary feature that must be provided for the ongoing spiritual growth and understanding of the community. Thus, they will realize a greater depth in Vedic spiritual knowledge, the deep thoughtful nature and beauty of the culture, and will be able to defend themselves philosophically when someone becomes demeaning or critical toward them or the Vedic tradition. They will also know more about how to pass on their culture to their children, who often will not accept the customs unless it makes sense to them. And making sense of things is possible only with the proper education about their tradition.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Book distribution is essential for the education of people in the culture and spiritual traditions. Of course, not everyone in the towns and villages will know how to read, but this is changing as each new generation is more educated. To distribute books such as *Bhagavad-gitas* that are in the local languages is very important. Other simple-to-understand books can also work well. For those who cannot read, having weekly classes to read from and discuss the book in order to increase the people's understanding of it and the philosophy can work well. This is especially good to do at the temple in groups. This setting, with everyone sitting together, provides a deeper sense of community and friendship, and commitment to each other and the culture. This can easily be done on a weekly basis along with the gatherings for *bhajans* and *arati* to the deity. A time should be scheduled for this every week, such as each Saturday or Sunday, or even each day when people can attend, such as the early morning or later in the evening for those who can make it. When everyone gathers at the temple, it is a perfect setting for such additional activities. Then each person can become stronger in their faith, as well as their understanding of the culture and philosophy.

People coming together in groups to hear, study, and discuss the deeper spiritual aspects of the *Bhagavad-gita* or other texts can also help chip away at any caste differences, or social classifications that seem to perpetuate unnecessary disparity between members. This is a major deterrent in India's and Hinduism's unity and cooperation, and ruins any hope for collective progress. So, this kind of group study and gathering can help bring about the process of changing the way everyone views each other.

A community that becomes increasingly united also becomes increasingly powerful to protect and preserve its tradition, and capable of curbing threats against it or conversions from its traditions and practices.

This is why temples must be constructed with large and open *mandapas* or halls to fit a congregation and devotees of all rank and file, and so they can worship together in collective groups.

RETRAINING FOR TEMPLE PRIESTS IN THE VILLAGES

Another way of reaching the villages has been started by the TTD management at Tirupati. After reaching out to Dalit colonies with 'Dalita Govindam,' the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) management has now taken up 'Matsya Govindam' which is aimed at fishermen hamlets dotting the long, coastal belt of the State, starting from Tada in Nellore to Itchapuram in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. For the first time in the country, a target group hitherto considered alien is being trained in temple rituals.

The fishermen will be taught the basic tenets of Vedic religion, development of the temple system, the "do's and don'ts" of deity worship, features of the *Agamas*, rituals, conduct of festivals and so on, besides increasing rapport with devotees.

The idea apparently sprang from the concern over the collapse of the temple system and Hindu form of worship in the coastal belt, mostly inhabited by members of the fishermen community. The coastline that is spread over nine districts has been found to have 213 temples in 187 villages. While 20 were dedicated to the Shakti or Veerabrahmam cult, the rest are "Ramalayams," temples of Lord Rama, mostly in a dilapidated condition. The move gained pace with the fishermen community itself complaining of 'poaching' by other faiths in the coastal belt. The president of Kakinada-based 'Matsyakara Sankshema Samithi,' Koduru Jayaram, had presented this idea to the TTD to save the Vedic temple system by training the members of the community in priesthood.

"The programme will also help in getting the fishermen into the fold of mainstream Hinduism," Bhuman, Director of the TTD's Sri Venkateswara Employees Training Academy (SVETA) told *The Hindu*.

The idea is that whoever is trained to be the temple priest, however simple his duties and knowledge may be at first, will engage in a week-long training session. Therein, the priests-to-be will have to wake up before dawn, perform *sankirtan*, yoga, meditation, recite *slokas*, and attend classes. A practical follow-up session is likely to be included in the module later. Then, after becoming fixed up in the temple program and with rekindled interest in their Vedic heritage, they become the full time priests of the temple and help the whole village in this manner.

The Swadhyaya group, who base much of their philosophy on Lord Krishna's teaching in the *Bhagavad-gita*, also does this in the villages around Mumbai, and afterwards also help the village men who are interested to find alternative careers to fishing. So this is a system that has much potential.

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE FOR MEDICAL CONCERNS

There are many additional ways to provide assistance to the villagers or people in general, who often get through life with only the barest of necessities. Something that has been beneficial in many areas is to organize a fund raising drive amongst people you know in your temple, or find sponsors to bring the villagers together to distribute blankets, clothes, and similar items that they need. Some temples do this on a regular or annual basis, with much appreciation by the villagers.

A friend of mine has also sponsored a medical van that drives around to the different villages. He bought the van, prepared it for patients, stocked it with medical supplies, and employed the personnel. It is a mobile clinic which houses the most essential medical facilities for doing regular diagnosis up to small operations. It works with a driver, a nurse, and a doctor. They pull into a village, usually on a particular scheduled day, and the villagers line up to attend to their needs. The doctor and nurse perform treatments right there, or give medicine as needed. More serious cases can be taken to a hospital. But many villagers are far away from cities and cannot get regular medical treatment in other ways. So this mobile clinic is extremely effective, and does not cost all that much to operate.

Another method is to organize medical and diagnostic camps in central villages or towns so that people from the area can attend to get examined or get some attention to their medical needs. Local doctors may get a little payment, or even overseas doctors, or NRI doctors, can come in to donate their time and skills.

Blood drives are also viable for members of a temple congregation to supply blood that may be required by those in need.

Often times, villagers cannot afford the simplest of things that they need to survive. And these simple methods outlined here can supply the means to take care of them without the need of foreign interests or those of other religions to get involved. This releases them from the threat of conversion tactics being applied, which is often the case when people of outside religions get involved, and then provide medical facilities or basic needs with the intention to convert the villagers to their religion.

PROVIDING FREE FOOD DISTRIBUTION FOR CHILDREN

A major concern is malnutrition amongst India's children. Adults also are affected by this. Thus, free food distribution programs

can be started by individuals and organizations to help in this regard. The government will often assist any program that sounds stable and dependable, and donations for such projects can be tax deductible when the organization has been registered as a tax-exempt, non-profit. Thus, prepared food, especially sanctified temple food, can be brought and distributed to people, especially to schools so the growing children can get at least one balanced meal a day while in school. This helps them concentrate on their studies, increases attendance, and lets them be free from worry that they have nothing to eat, or only unbalanced meals.

I have visited numerous schools, such as the Vivekananda Kendra schools, Iskcon schools, and others that provide meals for the children. Having eaten with the children, I know the food is quite nutritious. There are many other schools which do not offer this, but certain organizations will bring food, prepared in special kitchens, in trucks to feed several hundred children every school day. When various organizations network together, this can be especially effective, with the establishment of numerous special kitchens across the country, or at special temples that have the facilities to offer such food distribution to schools or villages. Combining the efforts between private and public partnerships, along with government grants or assistance, it is possible to feed many children at inexpensive rates, while supporting local farmers. It is also not uncommon that temples will collect donations for food to be prepared and then taken to the villagers. This will certainly help people both physically and spiritually. Plus, it also fulfills one of the purposes of Vedic temples. This is an enterprise and plan that many can participate in for alleviating another of India's problems.

RALLIES TO PROTEST GOVERNMENT'S BIASED ACTIONS

This is in regard to the peaceful protest rally that was organized in Tirupati on January 25th, 2008, wherein up to 10,000 people marched through the streets, and then gathered at a venue with other Dharmic leaders, Swamis, Acharyas, and guests speakers. The purpose was to protest the government's taking over management of some 32,000 Vedic temples in Andhra Pradesh, and what it was doing with temple-owned land and other assets that belonged to the temples. This is a way each individual can stand up and take a position for changing the future of India and protecting its culture. It is a way of bringing the people to the forefront. It is a way of showing the government that it is time to change its ways and policies, and give Vedic temple management back to the

Hindu majority, instead of establishing temple boards that have Muslims or atheists on them who obviously care little about the proper upkeep and operation of the temples. Having such rallies is a way of rekindling the defensive spirit in the general mass of Hindus or Dharmists. However, remember, this method can also work in other states of India and for other purposes as well.

It is especially powerful when the people see that Swamis and Acharyas care enough about them that such saintly men will personally pay a visit to their village, either on the Padayatra or otherwise, and participate in such rallies. It invokes much enthusiasm in the people who then are more than willing to participate in worship, programs, or rallies with similarly enthused people. It can and has created a powerful force for the cause of Dharma. As it happened, through this kind of rally and protest, and affiliated negotiations, the government of Andhra Pradesh gave 30,000 of the temples back to the Hindu majority, but kept 2000 of the most profitable temples for themselves, which is still being contested by the people. Furthermore, what the government has done, or allowed to be done with the temple's assets and properties needs additional investigation. But at least now the government knows they cannot do whatever they like without being watched and questioned.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS AND ORGANIZING VILLAGES

Once the above rallies and gathering of the people have been established, additional points to consider include the formation of political action committees or organizations to:

(A) Make sure politicians are aware of your issues,

(B) Make sure that they are representing you properly, and

(C) Unite voters to bring in a better political representative for the indigenous culture, and vote out of office those who are ineffective or worse.

Such a group for these purposes should be established in every village, if possible, to encourage people in this way, and to provide a means by which they can all stay connected and informed. If not in every village or town, groups should be formed in the district that networks and connects with the towns.

Here is an example of this kind of follow up with the government and with the townspeople who participated in the Padayatra. First, from a press release from Dr. Subramanian Swamy, from the 16th of February, 2008, he states:

"The Union Government must enter into an urgent consultation with the apex Hindu body of sadhus, namely the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha (HDAS) convened by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, to substantially amend the Hindu Religious Endowments and Charitable Trust Act (1951) to bring it in conformity with Article 25 and 26 of the Constitution. At present the Act provides for total and suffocating control of Hindu temples in the country by the Government at the Centre and States, while exempting Mosques and Churches completely even from Government oversight supervision. This is highly discriminatory against the Hindus who are 83% of India's population, and thus violates Articles 14, 25 and 26 of the Constitution."

In this way, the huge rally and march of 10,000 *bhaktas* of all ranks through Tirupati, which received coverage in every local newspaper, along with radio and television, would surely get the attention of all politicians. Then, follow-up meetings with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Rajashekhar Reddy, were scheduled in which the concerns were presented for restoring the temples to proper management, as well as the legal and constitutional grounds for why this should be done. Bringing 10,000 people to the march showed the support that such an issue has with the people. Therefore, Mr. Reddy's concern and cooperation would be important, otherwise the next step would be to take it to the courts, which someone like Dr. Subramanian Swamy would have no hesitation to do. Bringing it to the courts would then publicize all the more the affair and the unequal views that Mr. Reddy has had toward Hindus and their temples, compared with the churches that he seems to favor. But having and establishing the means to give the management of the temples back to an honest and purposeful committee is essential, and not to a government-formed group that would only continue the plunder of temples and their assets unabated.

The next example in the important steps to follow up with villagers and townspeople has been nicely summarized by another friend of mine, Mr. Badri:

"During the first Maha Padayatra, Sri Kamal Swamiji covered 3200 kilometers by foot, visiting close to 2500 village Mandirs in half the districts of Andhra Pradesh. The Second Maha Padayatra is scheduled to begin in August, 2008 and this will take him to the rest of the Districts and villages, this time covering 5000 kilometers.

"At each village, we have been able to identify the group of people who supported the cause and have exhibited great enthusiasm and Bhakti, forming reception committees at grass root levels. These have been connected to the respective District level of the Hindu Devalaya

Parirakshana Samiti. No wonder, we had 8000 simple Bhaktas visiting Tirupati on January 24 for the Bhakti Sangamam meeting. Voluntarily.

"Sri Kamal Swamiji will now visit all these villages, which he visited during his Padayatra, by car. He will meet the people, and thank them for their support to the cause. Reinforce their devotion. Give them the required confidence and direction. And at each village form the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti officially, getting the committee members in place and in working order. The structure starts from the bottom, with a strong foundation and grows upwards into a super-structure. The Organization Chart will be in place, drawn meticulously to become functional. These committees will be represented by Bhaktas from all caste configurations of each village, giving representation to ALL Hindu Bhaktas.

"During the next Padayatra, he will form similar committees in each village he visits. Thus we will have the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti committees spread into close to 5000 plus village Mandirs in Andhra Pradesh.

"These committees will be affiliated to their respective District Units which will in turn be affiliated to the State Unit of the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti.

"Our aim is to currently demand the government to drop the idea of the formation of its Dharma Parishad [government formed committee]. We want the government to hand over these Mandirs and its administration to the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti. With the presence of our Samiti at the village and district level, we will be in a better position to initiate the resuscitation of Nithya Pujas in these Mandirs. The Samaj will come forward to bring the Mandirs back to their pristine glory. It is a test to the truth of the Bhakti of each Hindu, as we achieve our goal within a time frame of three years from now.

"Believe me, each of the Mandirs will be on its way to its original glory. These will unite the Hindus. We will all come together, learn to manage our own Mandirs and, thus, our own religious and political affairs in the long run.

"The builders of these Mandirs placed their trust in us, the future generations of Hindus. It is time to start living up to their trust."

Now, can you begin to imagine how strong the Vedic culture would become if such actions would be initiated and taken in many parts of India? This is what we need to consider and begin to take the necessary actions that are most appropriate in every part of India.

* * *

These are ideas that can be expanded by those already engaged in such activities of protecting the culture of India and spreading it for everyone's benefit. But they could also be used by those who have remained in the complacent classes of India, who have not done that much, yet have grumbled that someone should do something about the situation and give the villagers a reason to remain in the Dharmic community. I have gotten those kinds of emails from people who have done little or nothing, but expect someone else to answer the call, which is another reason for me to write this book. Well, here is your chance to become active if you can get yourself started and make a plan and carry it out. Choose your strategy, either from any of these that are presented herein, or make new ones and work with others to make it a reality. It can make a big difference and inspire others to do something as well in whatever part of the country in which you reside. There is plenty of opportunity for everyone to pitch in and help.

For example, college students who want to become active in protecting and sharing their own culture can also take time to assist in educating villagers with stories of the *Puranas*, *Ramayana*, etc., or in helping build temples, raise funds, buy books, medical supplies, etc. You can show your enthusiasm by your example. Indian students who are becoming lawyers can also help engage in efforts to stop the Indian government from taking over the management of temples, or assist in other related and legal issues. Professionals, such as doctors, dentists, and others in the medical field from the Indian community, both in the United States as well as in India, could also help and donate their time or vacations to medical clinics in India, or act in other various ways. Others, such as architects, engineers, etc., can assist in the building of temples, medical clinics, or simple houses for people where needed. There are those who are already acting in this way, such as donating funds for the Ekal Vidyalaya, the one-teacher schools in tribal or remote villages, or the Global Hindu Heritage Foundation, who contributed much for the campaign to preserve the temples in Andhra Pradesh. So the structures and plans have already been put together for some of these areas of need, but there is more to be done.

Even though I am in America, I have still gone to India to do lecture tours to speak to crowds, and appear in newspapers and on television to try and do my part, and show that even we Westerners are most appreciative of what India and the Vedic culture has offered to the world. I show that I have taken up the practice of the Vedic traditions,

and also have written numerous books and articles like this one about India and its ancient knowledge and customs. In this way, I show myself as a role model and inspire Indians, no matter where they may be, big cities or small villages, Tamil Nadu or Nagaland, so that they will hold great respect for their own culture and realize how special and unique it is. Often I am quite surprised at how much appreciation they show for what I am doing. And India is where I have learned about and participated in the activities that I have herein described. That is why I am now writing about them with the hope that this book can inspire others who reside in India, or elsewhere, to do something more.

Other Westerners who have taken to the Vedic culture, and who are educated in various aspects of it, can also go to speak. Or, for those who are trained in Bharata Natyam dance, perform at festivals or other venues, and show themselves to Indian Hindus as positive role models who have taken up the practice of Vedic culture.

Of course, I realize that this description of ideas is far from complete. There are many more ideas that can be developed and utilized, and I will no doubt be adding to this from time to time. Other areas of improvement should include college presentations, city temple congregational expansion, spiritual education in the form of philosophical seminars and conferences, and more. But the ideas that are described herein are effective, they work and can be duplicated elsewhere, only if other devotees, Hindus and Dharmists will take up the cause and help. This is also the way to help ourselves in preserving, protecting, and promoting our Vedic heritage. Remember, we need to keep India the homeland of a dynamic and thriving Vedic tradition in cooperation with its modern technological and economic advancements.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Vedic Temples: Making Them More Effective

The best way to promote and defend Vedic Dharma is through cultural presentations. Imparting the universal spiritual truths as found in Sanatana-dharma, Hinduism, is like spreading a cultural revolution. And the center of that cultural revolution is the Vedic temples. The temples are the main facility to preserve this spiritual heritage and also to disseminate it through what temples provide for people to participate. This is also important for handing it down to the following generations. This is how people learn about it and understand its importance and develop the determination and sincerity to follow it and uphold its standards. This is how people remain resilient to keep it in their hearts no matter what else may happen. The temples are the centers from which the spiritual truths can expand throughout the community and beyond. They are also like launching pads from which sincere devotees can prepare for entering the spiritual dimension. This is why the temples should be as effective as possible.

Vedic or Hindu temples are sprouting up all over North America and in the Western world in general. Many new and large temples have also been opened in India. Though such an increase is happening in the West, the temples are still divided into two basic categories: Those that cater mostly to the Indian immigrants and their cultural needs, and those that truly open their doors in a way wherein people of all kinds can benefit, learn, and participate in the Vedic culture and its traditions. This is an issue that can be addressed towards India as well.

In a time when such things as globalization, interfaith, and cross-cultural relations are increasingly important, and when other religions are trying to convert as many as possible, it is also a time when we should try all the harder to allow others to understand the dynamic and profound nature of the Vedic tradition and philosophy. We have seen in years past

when many Western philosophers and historians, such as Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Will Durant, Aldous Huxley, Schopenhauer, Augustus Schlegel, and others, have appreciated and benefited from the study of the Vedic texts, such as *Bhagavad-gita*. The 1960s saw a great rise in the interest of the philosophy and practice of the Vedic and Eastern ways. Similarly, today many people are increasing their interest in Yoga, Ayurveda, Jyotish, Vastu, as well as Indian dance and music. In fact, many people are using principles found in Yoga or even Kautilya's *Artha Shastra* for perfecting various business practices. But how many places, except in special yoga studios or small schools that provide classes in Eastern thought, offer facilities where everyone can apply and practice the traditions of Vedic culture? There are more interested people out there than most people realize. All it takes is the means to invite them, both to enter the temples and then to make them feel welcomed.

First, it may be better to view temples in the right perspective, which is that, naturally, the temple should be the center of the Vedic or Dharmic community, and main preserver of our traditions.

Temples are considered part of the spiritual atmosphere, maintained by *sadhana*, rituals, service, mantras, and presence of the devotees and deities. It is here where Ishwara, Bhagavan, is more easily accessible for the spiritually focused devotee, like a launching pad for a space-bound rocket. It is the temple and through the deity where we especially have *darshan*, the act of not only seeing the Lord but being seen by the Lord. But temples should also be the embassies of the spiritual world, the domain of the Supreme Lord, open for fulfilling the spiritual needs of everyone. They should help bring the spiritual world and its vibration, energy, and atmosphere into this material creation, and help bring all others back into the spiritual domain by awakening them to their spiritual identity.

In this way, most of the Vedic/Hindu temples in America, and many in India, are not as effective as they could be to gather a wider audience for both support of the local Vedic community, and the participation in the ways of Vedic knowledge and tradition. So what can we do about this? How can we utilize the temples to more effectively help increase the ways we can preserve, protect, and share the Vedic culture for the benefit of all?

IT IS ALL IN THE PRESENTATION

The basic purpose of temples is to provide the means by which the Vedic culture and philosophy can be understood by everyone and anyone, in whatever way is best for communicating it in this day and age. The principle that can be used is the same that I use when writing my books, which is: If they do not understand it, they will not remember it; if they do not remember it, they will never apply it in their lives; if they do not or cannot apply it in their lives, then it will not be of benefit for them, and you will have failed to convey it properly and have missed your mark. Therefore, we all must be knowledgeable enough to help others understand the essence of the Vedic tradition and philosophy. Of course, if we cannot do it, then let those teachers who are qualified do it.

Nowadays, in America at least, most people will accept what may be new ideas to them if it is presented in a logical way. How many times have we seen Hindus, or anyone for that matter, who is challenged with a critical question or condescending comment about their culture and then react with an emotional or defensive response? This is often an immediate turn-off for those who hear this kind of reply. However, if someone witnesses or hears a logical, common sense or even scientific explanation of our traditions, they will often accept it. They may or may not at first follow it, but we do not expect that if we are only sharing our culture. But there are many people looking for a philosophy that helps them make sense of this life, of this existence in which we find ourselves, and if they understand the dynamics of the Vedic explanations, they may indeed begin to utilize it in their life.

How else can we explain the number of magazines on the newsstand that cover the topics of yoga and Eastern philosophy and Indic traditions unless Western people are interested in them and want to learn more? That is where our Vedic temples come in to not only assist the Indian population, but to help our local communities of non-Indians as well. So how can we utilize this in the temples?

USING THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

One of the strongest methods of sharing anything is through a universal language. Is there a universal language that we can all share? Is there a means of expression that can inspire us all?

What comes closest to a universal form of communication is music. It is the one form of expression that has always touched the hearts

and minds of innumerable people, whether they are young or old, from different races or ethnic groups, or whether the meaning of the words are understood or not. The feeling and emotion can still penetrate and inspire a person's heart with its mood and message.

One thing that has always been utilized in the Vedic tradition is the use of music. This may be the meter in which the mantras or sutras of the Vedic *samhitas* are chanted, or it can be the devotional songs and prayers which are sung in soft meditative *bhajans*, or in rousing *kirtans* that involve the whole congregation. These may be detailed verses sung in the temple to the deity, or it may be a simple mantra like the Hare Krishna mantra sung with an uncomplicated melody which becomes all the more powerful as the number of people who sing along increases. Such music may be simple, accompanied by only a drum and hand cymbals, or it may be accompanied with additional instruments like harmonium, organ, guitar, sitar, flute, etc.

The singing and dancing in the temple with such transcendental or spiritual vibrations and songs can do much to bring people together with one objective: to be happy in the unity we share in the spiritual atmosphere that helps bring out our realization of our spiritual identity, and which also brings us into contact with the Supreme Lord. This experience goes beyond verbal communication, but uses the universal language of music to invoke that mood of devotion and service. In fact, Vedic *shastra* explains that in this age of Kali-yuga, this process is the most important of all.

It has been seen time and time again wherein if a temple program uses this type of method, such as *kirtanas* to allow everyone to participate and become inspired, that we all can lose our differences and become increasingly united in the unique experience. This needs to be a constant part of any and every program or celebration that the temples present.

This is why temples must have a hall for collective participation in chanting and singing prayers and observing *puja*, worship. It brings a sense of community and strength when the Dharmic or devotee community can do this together in large groups, both men and women, young and old, adults and children. This creates deep *samskaras* or impressions in the mind that help purify and strengthen us for long periods of time.

TEMPLE CLASSES

One of the most important functions of any temple is having regular classes for both Indian Dharmists and Western students. The problem is that Hindus generally go to the temple for *puja*, worship or rituals, and *darshan* at different times. And many temples do not have regularly scheduled classes in which groups of people can attend for continuous study of the sacred texts. Most Indians always say, "Oh, yes, I know *Bhagavad-gita*." And maybe they do, until they realize how much they do not know when asked to explain it. But this is also something I have encountered while traveling in India, that many Hindus are not really educated in their own tradition, and, thus, lack the ability to explain or defend their own unique culture. Or they even become more susceptible to the conversion tactics used by other religions because of their lack of understanding the depths of their own Vedic traditions. Or here in America, because of this lack of comprehension, when they are criticized in the workplace for being Hindu or from India, they do not know how to respond. Thus, in these situations, they sometimes would simply prefer that no one know that they are from India or follow Vedic Dharma. And sometimes they want to fit in to Western society to such a degree that they even give up basic Dharmic standards and take up the Western ways, such as going to bars with fellow workers, eating meat, flirting with women, etc.

So how we correct this is to have regular group classes for the whole congregation at the temple so everyone can get a better understanding of the Vedic tradition, its philosophy and proper standards. This can be classes in *Bhagavad-gita*, *Bhagavata Purana*, or other books. Days like Sunday when most people are free from work would be appropriate, or on particular week nights when others may participate. This can also include interactive sessions wherein people can practice responding to various questions or even criticisms to test themselves in what can be a fun and creative way. At some Buddhist monasteries, the monks debate with each other as a regular part of their training. We have to understand that any Hindu who comes into a situation where they have to display their character or knowledge of the Dharmic tradition becomes a representative of the whole culture and of all other Dharmists. We should all be prepared for this. In this way, all temples must provide education of the Vedic tradition, and hold classes for children, and for parents so they know what to teach their children. All questions should be explained to educate children and make the adults stronger.

I have also attended group classes conducted weekly at people's homes. They may have a knowledgeable friend or temple representative lead the class with elaborations on the *Bhagavad-gita* verses. This is nice because there can be time for informal questions and discussions.

To help in this area, priests should also be well trained in the Vedic traditions, but should also have modern education. They should be able to explain all aspects and meanings of the rituals and philosophy in a comprehensive manner and offer guidance to the people in such matters. They must have great love for the Vedic tradition and what they do, and serve the people nicely who follow it. They should preferably be able to discuss aspects of the Western religions to properly explain the comparative differences or similarities to inquisitive students, whether they are Indian or Westerners.

The temple must also provide the ways of teaching how the Vedic avenues of self-realization and reaching one's full potential can be applied to everyday life. It must be shown how the Vedic tradition is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. If the local priests are not expert in providing this knowledge, the temple can easily bring in others who have experience in making such presentations or speaking about such topics for both adults and youngsters to gain strength and knowledge.

For example, I have made presentations to many Indian groups and organizations who have been impressed with the way I have expounded the advantages of the Vedic path, and I know others in various parts of the country who can do the same. So we can be utilized for this purpose.

For Westerners, classes at the temple may be a little different. You can attract them by advertising "Free Yoga and Meditation Class and Workshop" as an introduction. Then later offer more intensive courses for a cost. The introduction can be a short talk, then have a hatha-yoga session, usually presented by the temple priest or a congregational member who is qualified as a teacher. Then have a *kirtan* session with an easy mantra, like the Hare Krishna mantra, explaining that this is the yoga of sound. Then maybe include a session of one round of *japa*, wherein all the students get a set of *japa* beads and together they chant one mantra on each bead to complete one round of 108 beads. Thus, they also learn "*japa* meditation," and can continue this practice at home. This arrangement works well for anyone, as I have seen this program done in many temples in India as well.

So, offer a class in yoga, which is very popular these days, and then a class in the philosophical foundation of it. Westerners are more

interested in the yoga than the philosophy, but this is how you can draw them and spark their interest. In fact, many Indians may be the same. Make sure the teachers you use, who may be members of your local congregation, are well versed and can handle questions with patience and understanding.

Use the modern phrases for topics of interest. These are especially things like Yoga, Ayurveda, Jyotish, Vastu, etc. You may have to provide a little explanation of these, but many people are interested in them.

Focus on the interest in Yoga and cultural presentations. An increasing number of people are becoming less interested in sharing religion, sometimes because they do not want to deal with attempts at being converted by them, but will feel no hesitancy to be invited or to investigate another culture. Some of the more progressive and open-minded groups of people want more spirituality than dogmatic religion for personal growth and realizations. And the Vedic tradition has much colorful and exciting culture to offer anyone. So focus on these types of presentations to arouse people's curiosity, while at the same time giving opportunity for those who already follow the Vedic traditions to be proud of their culture.

Temples with facility, and with a teacher who is qualified, can also offer Indian dance lessons and workshops, along with demonstrations of them for cultural exhibits. You simply have to find the means to advertise or let people know about them. I know of several Western ladies who became more interested in Vedic tradition because of their interest in Indian dance. Others may already be interested in the Vedic culture and simply want to continue with it by learning Indian dance.

Classes for learning Sanskrit is another avenue that can help preserve the tradition. There are also an increasing number of groups or organizations that offer quick classes, or more full length courses in Sanskrit. The temple can network with such groups.

Another aspect of temple activities and education is political awareness. The appropriate temple members, excluding the priests and temple managers for legal reasons, can also advise the others on the issues that affect the general Dharmic community so they can be aware of which politicians are the most likely to uphold the Dharmic principles and, thus, be worth our votes during the elections, both in America and in India. To say we should not be interested in politics is shear irresponsibility, especially when other religions become huge voting blocks to support those who promise to fulfill their needs.

Dharmists/Hindus should display the same awareness and power of influence.

EDUCATING THE YOUTH

The growth and continuation of Vedic Dharma in America, and India as well, especially depends on how well our children are educated and remain fixed in the timeless traditions of our culture. The temples naturally have to provide the means to educate and also involve the children, youngsters, and teenagers in the temple in learning and upholding the tradition. Therefore, temples should support programs like *gurukulas*, or BalGokulams and BalVihars for training the youth in Vedic philosophy and values, Vedic scripture, yoga, rituals, and the Indian Vedic heritage.

The temple and its congregation—the parents—should be able to fund youth activities wherein the youngsters feel important and cared for. The temple support should listen to the youth to see what is valuable and meaningful to them and then work to fulfill those needs. For example, boys and girls have particular interests, which should be developed at the temple. They may enjoy hearing about history through the activities of the heroes and heroines who acted in adventurous ways for the preservation of Vedic Dharma. Or they may like the arts and sciences, and want to learn such things. But what else do they need to learn, know, and participate in at the temple? This should be discerned and arranged in order to utilize the ideas the youth and teenagers present. Find out what they like.

Summer youth camps of a few days or a week or so wherein youngsters can come together for various activities that are fun or educational always make great impressions and memories. Some of the activities at such youth camps can include learning Vedic culture and its values, study of the Vedic scriptures and epics, morning yoga, introduction to Sanskrit, talent shows, games and sports, a bonfire, boating, swimming, hena art for the girls, poster making, various arts and crafts, water balloon fight, clay doll and image making, various competitions, and panel discussions on various issues, depending on their age.

Also, the temple can set up support groups or structures for the decisions the youth or young adults need to make, such as for those who want or recently have gotten married so right and proper decisions about things they are facing can be made. Or set up a group so they can learn

the differences in other religions if they are considering marrying someone of a different faith. Especially for girls, conversions forced through marriage can be considered a human rights violation that often cause rifts in the marriage and family, and difficulties and confusion for any children that are conceived. Love is often blind and the perceptiveness to future difficulties may also be shallow in seeing the challenges of interfaith marriages without proper education and support, which could be supplied by the temple. It is typical that one, two, or at the most three generations after an interfaith marriage, the children are no longer followers of Vedic Dharma.

For more information on this topic, you may want to read the chapter: "Giving Vedic Culture to the Next Generation."

MENTORING PROGRAMS

Temples can also establish mentoring programs. This would be for the older youth to become friends with and help teach what they know of Vedic traditions to the younger ones. This gives a sense of responsibility to the older youth, and a level of admiration and acceptance to the younger one's who often look up to those who are not so much different in age than they are, but are still viewed as older and wiser. In this way, everybody learns and helps each other progress.

Classes in Indian cooking are also often of interest to the youth, especially the girls, some of whom may be really enthusiastic to learn, and may find they have a real talent in this area.

TRAINING TEMPLE MEMBERS IN SERVICE

All those who attend the temple should be trained in service, or *seva*. God or is present everywhere but especially in the temple, which magnifies our concentration and focus on serving the Supreme, especially in the form of the deity on the altar. Thus, the temple belongs to the Lord and all service at the temple is directly linked to the deity of the Lord. Therefore, all aspects of temple activities provide a way for everyone's spiritual progress and uplifting and spiritualizing ourselves in God consciousness. In this way, any service we do, whether sweeping floors, cleaning pots in the kitchen, fundraising, managing, welcoming guests, giving donations for temple or deity facilities, maintaining the building, etc., is all service for the Supreme. And such service is an

example of bhakti-yoga, developing devotion for the Lord. It is also good for making the right *samskaras* and impressions in our consciousness, as well as being a good example for our children who may follow what we do. Therefore, we could also say that the temple is "our temple" in being the place where we can make it into whatever expression we want as a manifestation of our devotion to God.

For this reason, complete understanding of the significance, meaning, and the installation process of the deity in the temple should also be provided so no one approaches with too little respect, or has a misconception of the spiritual power of the deity. Flyers or brochures with such information can be excellent handouts to give to the members and guests of the temples to increase awareness of such things. They can also be used to help explain basic points of the philosophy, especially to new guests.

Furthermore, there are frequent attempts to pester the faith of Hindus and devotees with misguided views and interpretations of the philosophy to try and cause doubts and skepticism, both in America and India. Dogmatics from other religions often try to propagate distorted views of the great Vedic Dharma and its tradition. The way to counter such measures is twofold: By proper education of the real meaning and purpose of Vedic Dharma, and to train people in the attitude and act of servitude and devotion to God, which paves the way for them to attain the higher and most convincing taste of the reciprocal exchange with the Supreme. Once this is reached, or even a glimpse of it, no one can knock them from their established position of solid experience of higher realizations. This is attainable by all sincere souls and is the purpose of the temple and goal of all devotees.

TEMPLE ASHRAMAS

Another consideration is to have ashramas for training as opposed to joining. Often we see that people think that they enter an ashrama once they join an organization or faith. But many times people easily pay money to enter a retreat for a time in order to gain peace of mind, or engage in a course of study, meditation, yoga practice, or means of learning about the Self by realization and practice, etc. This may be for a weekend, a month, three months, or longer. Sometimes people like to spend the weekend at the temple, and an ashrama or guestrooms can be quite essential for such a purpose. So ashramas can also be established in which people can enter for a certain length of time for a specific

purpose, be trained and help with service around the temple, and then leave after a period of time with a deeper understanding of what the Vedic knowledge is and how to apply it in their lives. Afterwards, they may become a permanent participant in the temple activities.

For this purpose, if a temple does not have facility to have its own designated ashrama area, it is good if it can connect with another temple or country retreat that does have such facility so if anyone is interested, it can be recommended so temple members can go for retreats.

TEMPLES MUST BE WELL KEPT

There are many large and beautiful temples being built, but temples of all sizes must be clean, well kept, organized, and nicely maintained. We should be proud of our temples, and nothing makes for a poorer impression than one that is dirty or ill-maintained. Guests especially notice the beauty of a temple, and also of anything that is out of order. Large and ornate temples are always impressive and can be used in great public relations work as well, especially when a temple provides facility for the local non-Vedic community to tour and see the place. I have seen this so many times. So, a temple that does not offer its facility for others to see and appreciate is a temple that is only 50% effective in the work it should be doing. And this primarily depends on the temple management. So if the management cannot see how to do this, or is not interested, then they are not fulfilling their own true potential or the higher purpose for which a temple should be established.

FESTIVALS & PROGRAMS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are so many holidays that are celebrated in the Vedic tradition, and these should be done as part of the joy and celebration of the heritage for all Hindus and Dharmists. However, there can easily be some that can be open to the general public. Special holy days like Krishna Janmasthami, RamaNauvami, Holi, and others, can be arranged in a way wherein the local non-Vedic community, especially in the Western countries, can come to watch, participate, and enjoy. First they need to be invited, or know they are welcome. Once they arrive, there needs to be a welcome committee that can help show them around and explain things. Flyers or handouts can also be arranged that will help explain the meaning of various parts of the temple and the holiday being

observed, and what activities they may like to do. If it is Holi, guests may also like to participate in the throwing of colors. If not, they can just watch.

I have seen, such as at the Krishna temple in Spanish Fork, Utah, wherein as many as 10,000 people, mostly Westerners, attend their Holi celebration. They sell packs of colored powders, which adds to the revenue of the festival, and along with plays or skits based on the Puranic histories, they later gather around a circle, all singing and dancing to the tune of Hare Krishna, and then the first colors are thrown and then everyone joins in. And they like it as it signifies throwing their cares away to unite in the spiritual atmosphere of the festival. Now who would not be attracted to that? In this way, many people are intrigued and fascinated to come to the temple and participate in various festivals. Other temples can take lessons from this.

WELCOMING NON-HINDUS INTO THE VEDIC FOLD

There are some organizations, such as Iskcon, which welcome non-Indians and non-devotees to become members of the Vedic family through an initiation process. There is no spiritual or *shastric* injunction that says this is not to be done. There may be a few brahminical traditions that discourage the idea of anyone participating in Vedic practices. However, everyone is a spiritual being, and everyone has the right to learn about their spiritual identity through the Vedic process. Therefore, everyone can follow this path and become part of the Vedic family. There is no problem, and this also helps encourage everyone to participate in and support Vedic culture.

Furthermore, as Indian Hindus increasingly get married to non-Hindus, especially in the West, if there is no way for the non-Hindu to come to the Vedic temples and participate, feel welcome, or even join the path of Sanatana-dharma, then it also increases the likelihood that the Hindu partner will participate and even convert to the religion of his or her spouse. There is no reason for this. But we should be ready and willing to welcome everyone to participate in temple activities and feel a part of the Vedic family.

BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Temples must have books to offer or sell. This is extremely important for the philosophical and cultural education of the members,

and also for other guests who are looking for books that they may not be able to find anywhere else. We only have to let people know what we have to offer, and what books are available so they can come to check them out. So many times I have heard where people have been looking for spiritual knowledge but did not know where to find the knowledge that we have to offer. One quote was, "I've been living on this planet for 35 years and had no idea that this kind of spiritual philosophy was available." So if we are going to be as effective as we should be, then at least we need to let people know what they can find within the Vedic heritage and how they can have access to it through our temples. And one of the best ways to do that is to have books available that they can take with them and study.

The temple can also offer whole sets of books, like an instant library at a special discount price for any family. Or offer to install a set of books, like the *Bhagavad-gita*, *Bhagavata Purana* and others, as a deity in the home. There can be an installation ceremony to sanctify the place and the occasion, and then the books can be installed into a nice cabinet. Books such as the *Bhagavata Purana* is considered the literary and sound *avatara* of the Lord. So, naturally, the temple benefits by making these available.

There are many other ways to distribute books besides offering them at temples, but that is a separate topic, and numerous ideas are available. Nonetheless, this can be a great service to the people and also be another way of financial support for the temple.

CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS

Besides festivals, special cultural presentations are also ways of attracting people to the temple, and ways for the temple to be more effective and useful. I go to the local Bharatiya Temple regularly for its cultural programs, whether they are fundraisers for the temple, or a presentation by a traveling spiritual teacher. In these cultural programs, they often have a talk, slideshow, a musical presentation, or a dance exhibition by a noted dance troupe. There is often an area in the hall where various items, such as devotional books, prints and photos, etc., can be purchased. Of course, there is also a vegetarian *prasada* dinner for everyone. Again, if the occasion has a special meaning, flyers or brochures can be made that help explain its significance.

So everyone can be invited to such a presentation, and invitations can also be sent to the local community in order to share the

culture, which also creates good public relations for the neighbors. And everyone feels satisfied after seeing such culture and talent.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Every temple can also have outreach programs where they cater to different types of people in the community. One is to have college or school programs to let students understand more about India and the ancient Vedic tradition. Schools especially are interested in culture. And cultural programs are always more acceptable for getting into the schools than a religious presentation. And the Vedic tradition has much culture to offer. Through such programs you can also interest people to further their education and development by inviting them to the temple. Through these programs you can offer things like skits or plays, or dance demonstrations. After the dance, you can invite the students to try out the dances, which they often find quite fun. Some may want to go on to take lessons, which has happened.

Cooking classes are also quite effective and popular wherein the students not only learn how to cook some Indian preparations, but enough food is brought or prepared so that the students can also have a meal and try some of the preps after the lesson. Many students will attend just for that.

If you do not have a team to do this, or if the temple priests are too busy with temple activities, another simple cultural program you can offer is slideshows of holy places in India, or of festivals, and things like this, which many students will not have seen before. It takes only one person to put on a slideshow and speak about it. So it can be most interesting to them, and help educate them about the real aspects of Indian and Vedic culture.

The thing is that various teachers, especially in places like America or England, are often looking for this kind of presentation to further the education and cultural understanding of their students. Or Indian children themselves will appreciate someone being able to help increase the understanding of their culture to their friends or fellow students, especially if a Westerner is making the presentation. It adds to the credibility for the Indian student who may be amongst many other Westerners who do not understand India.

An example of what I mean is that once I was staying with an Indian Hindu family in which the children were going to a typical public school here in America. The children would sometimes be subjected to

some jokes about the food they would bring to eat at school. So they did not like the other students to see what they ate. But when I was there and I would eat with the family, the children saw me eating lots of chapattis and having seconds and thirds on the vegetable *subji.* Then they also felt better about what they ate and had more courage against whatever anyone might say to them. So this sort of exchange helps.

So if the Indian youth know they can call their local temple for such a presentation or slide show, it will be greatly appreciated. But you have to let people know it is available. Such simple cultural presentations can also be done at people's homes as well.

Similar programs can also be done at local Unitarian churches who like to investigate other spiritual paths. This creates great public relations, good cross-cultural dialogue, and I have seen where some church members like to visit the temple regularly after learning about it. The point is that you never know what positive things might happen from such programs.

TEMPLE TOURS AND CULTURAL EXHIBITS FOR LOCAL STUDENTS

As we are speaking about cultural programs at schools, school classes can also come to the temple. At my local Hare Krishna temple there are a few comparative religious classes who have field trips, and every year they come to participate in a free Sunday program and feast. This gives the students a great taste of what the temple is like. Some students like it very much. And some of them come back regularly after that first visit. So when teachers know they can come to the temple, they can make arrangements to do so.

Another aspect of this is that on occasion teachers will bring the students to the temple during the week. However, this usually means making a special arrangement. Depending on what you have to offer, the students may come for an *arati* ceremony, maybe a traditional *bhajan* with Indian instruments, a talk, and then some *prasada*. If the temple has other things to see, then you can take them on a tour. Then they can also visit the temple gift shop for items that may interest them, such as books, incense, posters, photos, beads, etc.

For a school class in America, for example, to have a tour at the temple, with a talk, and a lunch, you may charge them at a rate of $5 per student, depending on what they want. For a class of say 50 students, this can bring in $250 before expenses, or a class of 90 students can bring in

$450, not counting any gift shop purchases. Thus, the students get spiritual and educational benefit and have a nice outing from the school, and the temple benefits as well. In India, the program can be done for a lesser charge.

TEMPLE EXHIBITS

When considering these kinds of tours or cultural programs at the temple, it is also nice when the temple has exhibits, such as dioramas, that help explain and show the philosophy in action. When I was invited to speak at a Swadhyaya group convention at Madison Square Garden in New York City several years ago, there was one floor dedicated to various exhibits of diorama dolls and placards, computer based presentations and others that helped show the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gita* and the work of the organization in action. It was practically self-explanatory. Temples can have a few rooms of this sort as well, or even a full museum if they have the facility in order to attract people and show the philosophy in action.

Another example of this is in Kurukshetra, the holy town about three hours north of Delhi by train. There you can find a Krishna Museum managed by the government, which is a building with three floors of all kinds of displays, dioramas, deities, etc., all related to Krishna. This included life size dioramas of Krishna with the Pandavas, Krishna on a horse, scenes from the battle of Kurukshetra, musical instruments, paintings from various parts of India, and much more. It is truly beautiful and impressive. You could not help but be affected by it, and if a temple came up with anything like that, even in a smaller degree, it would be great for both Indian Hindus as well as Western students.

TEMPLE GIFT SHOPS

Temples must also have gift shops where people can purchase items that will help their spiritual practice and development. The most effective temples have gift shops for books, *japa* beads, maybe some musical instruments like *karatala* hand cymbals and *mridanga* drums, photos and prints of the Vedic divinities and the temple deities, recordings of *bhajans* and *kirtans* or lectures by noteworthy personalities, marble or brass deities, packaged *prasada* or sanctified food, and other paraphernalia. This will also facilitate Westerners and

help draw them to the temple, especially if the gift shops have particular hours in which they are open, and where they can get items that may not be available anywhere else. This way, both Indians and Westerners know where they can go to get the books or paraphernalia they need to enhance their spiritual development. Thus, the gift shop becomes another draw to the temple.

The temples that are the most successful at this are some of the Iskcon temples, like in Los Angeles or New York, and also the Swami Narayana temples, such as at Akshardham in New Delhi or Gandhinagar, where the gift shops are quite large and contain lots of items from which people can choose. If a temple does not have a gift shop, then that temple is much less effective than it could be in offering the means for everyone to practice the Vedic traditions, and, thus, there is less reason to go to the temple.

SPIRITUAL LIBRARIES

The rarest and deepest spiritual knowledge can be found in the Vedic texts. In this age, there is no reason why everyone should not have access to all levels of this knowledge and information, from the youngest to the oldest. So temples can also have spiritual libraries.

For example, there can be children's books for the youngsters to better engage them in understanding the Vedic moral principles, the Puranic histories, inspiring biographies, and numerous stories with which they can relate and get excited. These can include coloring or activity books, both in the library and sold in the temple gift shops.

Another aspect of this would be to include audio visual facilities so the children can immediately become involved in watching the stories come alive. Many times this completely captivates the children who are, thus, trained in the Vedic culture, especially if these are in the common language of the children, as opposed to being only in Sanskrit or Hindi. In the West, many Indian children understand English better than the Indian languages. So that is how such media can be conveyed for the ease of learning by the children. For example, if children in India understand the local language better, then that is the language that needs to be used. Such facilities can also be used for a "children's story hour" or something developed just for youngsters. Then children will acquire a natural attraction to come to the temple and participate. This may also inspire students to travel to or throughout India to see the temples and

holy places to provide for first-hand experience in learning about Vedic culture.

Naturally, since temples are the foundations of dispersing spiritual knowledge, such libraries should have numerous volumes for answering various questions of adults. Thus, such libraries can have the essential Vedic texts, as well as books by the spiritual masters, or on yoga, Indian travel guides about the temples and holy places, etc. The most popular books can be sold in the temple gift shop.

TEMPLE RESTAURANTS

Another enterprise an effective temple can use is a nice vegetarian restaurant. If families want to go out for a meal, then let them come to the temple for sanctified food, *prasadam*. This can help add to the financial income of the temple if it is done well. It may require the right personnel and management if it offers a wide menu, but if the temple does not have such facility it can also be done in a simple manner with just a small buffet where people can stop in for some *prasada* while they are at the temple for a small donation. This can be refreshing and also facilitate the spiritual interests of guests who may appreciate something to eat, or at least some deity *prasada* before they leave the temple. Sometimes a vegetarian restaurant is not so easy to find in some towns, so this would also facilitate people, Indian Hindus or Westerners alike who have that interest. A restaurant next to the gift shop is a nice way for guests to finish their visit to the temple.

SUPPORT GROUPS

The importance of support groups that are established or assisted by the temple, or by temple members, cannot be stressed enough. It is a way of assisting and providing the means for the Dharmic or devotee community to come together and help one another in both spiritual and other aspects of life.

The fact is that the Indian and Dharmic community in America has become developed enough that, besides going to the usual government agencies for assistance, there is no reason why we should go outside our own group for support. We have a broad latitude of professionals and educated people to provide a wide variety of advice and cooperative enterprises and assistance.

This is especially important in India where it is seen that when the Hindu community does not provide the means to take care of its own people, there are many other organizations, often connected with various religious affiliations such as Christianity, who are waiting to come in and help with the notion that this is a way to make new converts. There is no reason for this, but the Dharmic/Hindu community must be willing and cooperative to provide the support to those who need it. In other words, if we do not take care of our own, someone else will. And such support can easily be centered around the temples as service to the deity in service to humanity.

So, let us look at some of the support groups that can be established. Now anyone who knows how I write should also know that these ideas are not new, but are examples of what some temples are already successfully doing. So, if they can be done in one temple, they can be done in others. Let us also remember that the more support a temple can provide for its members, the more reasons there are for members to stay with that temple and why new members should join, and why they should have more pride in the ability, compassion, and cooperation of their own community.

These are some of the groups or regularly scheduled interactive workshops that could be developed, aside from the classes and needs that have already been mentioned:

A. Grief counseling—when there is a death in the family.
B. Health assistance—doctors or nurses who can assist those in need, such as in having health fairs for anyone who attends.
C. Mental health—like depression.
D. Seniors care & support network—especially for those with no family.
E. Domestic violence & assistance in family disputes.
F. Chaplain service—such as visiting hospitals, nursing homes and family homes for prayers and counseling.
G. Additional Community service for both inside and outside the Indian or devotee community.
H. Blood drives are an example.
I. Driving Service—giving seniors or those who need rides to the temple.
J. Communication skills workshops.
K. Youth support & conferences—like dealing with their issues of leading a Dharmic life in a changing world.
L. Educational assistance.

M. Lessons in English.
N. Confidence building.
O. Problem solving teams—dealings on all levels of challenges.
P. Youth executive development—to encourage and provide association centered on the temple for future executive trainees.
Q. Social issues—like dealing with violence on television and its affects on our children.
R. Vanaprastha support—workshops and seminars to help those who are retiring to plan the years ahead.
S. Support a Child—especially for children in India, to support the lodging, healthcare, books, clothing, and to eradicate illiteracy.
T. Support a Mataji—for supporting the elder ladies who may be without family but want to live in a simple way for spiritual success, possibly in an ashrama setting.
U. Ekal Vidyalaya—support for the one teacher schools in rural India.
V. Serving in homeless shelters.
W. Providing facility for food distribution to the hungry, like Iskcon's "Food for Life."
X. Overcoming addictions—emphasizing Dharmic values to gain strength over addictions, like alcohol or drugs.
Y. Agrarianism—supporting temple gardens or farms to grow our own food, and promoting the Vedic lifestyle in the mode of goodness, and for self-sufficiency.

There can also be what could be called the "Temple Newcomer's Club" that could welcome new members to the temple, familiarize them with the area if they are from out of town, introduce them to new friends, temple activities, show them how they can be engaged in temples services, and invite them to any temple meetings for further participation.

These are some of the support groups for activities, workshops, or fundraising that can help temple members and others through life while keeping their focus on the Dharmic values that every temple should promote.

PILGRIMAGES TO THE HOLY PLACES OF INDIA

Organizing trips through India may also be worthwhile for the youth so they can learn more about the country and culture of India.

Even Indian adults may not have seen as much of their country as they would have liked and could do so through such journeys. Furthermore, many western seekers long for traveling to the exotic places of India to see the numerous temples, holy sites, or attend major festivals. What better way to promote awareness of India and its Vedic traditions than through such pilgrimages?

Preparations for the trip can be arranged through the study of various holy places, and which places may be of most interest to visit. Classes or even slide shows of the holy sites, temples, festivals, and traditions of Vedic India can also generate interest. This part of it would not be expensive. Anyone who has a collection of slides of their various travels can help educate or create interest in this aspect of India. Then trips to various holy sites can be arranged so all interested parties can go. Smaller temples can connect with bigger temples that may have more facility to make such arrangements.

PROMOTION

In spite of whatever you have to offer, you must let people know that you exist and what are your facilities. Otherwise, you will be overlooked. So what are some of the ways we can do this?

A website is mandatory for a temple. You can put so much information on it, from photos of the temple and the deities, a map and directions to reach the temple, times of the *pujas* and *aratis*, when it opens and closes, an introduction to the philosophy or the identity of the deities, the purpose of the temple, and even who are the head priests or managers. This is your first introduction to whoever may be interested.

Then you can have a link to the temple website on the website of other temples or members who have websites.

Newsletters are next. A quarterly paper newsletter is nice, but nowadays many temples are sending news out through emails. You can collect numerous email addresses of your temple members or visitors who want to hear what is happening at the temple, and then send them quarterly newsletters or announcements whenever something special is happening, such as when a special program or festival will take place, or when a noteworthy person will be giving a talk, interesting classes that will be given, or the special preparations that the temple restaurant will be having, or so many other things that can help draw people to the temple. Also, be sure that whatever good things that have happened, new

developments, or accomplishments are announced so people can know of these things and support them.

Advertising for events may also be considered. In any advertisement, when you want to get the word out about something, always include your website for more information. Some of the places you can advertise are in temple directories, phone books, local papers, or Indian newspapers. You can also use posters or flyers in Indian stores, or go door-to-door to reach people, or store-to-store, and so many places. However, be careful to reach your audience as effectively as possible because sometimes no matter how nice the advertisement is, if it is in the wrong place, it still will have little effect.

Calendars with beautiful photos of the temple deities are also a most attractive way to remind people of the temple, of the deities, of upcoming festivals, so they stay in touch. If it is really high quality, the photos may be worth framing and many will want to have a calendar. So it may become like a collectible.

Furthermore, just as we see billboards throughout India about how Jesus loves you and all that, why not spend some money about the benefits of coming to the temple, or how Krishna loves you, or how a Swami is coming to give lectures for your benefit. I see this in some places like Vrindavana, so many pundits, devotees, or swamis that are coming to Vrindavana have their photos plastered on billboards so everyone knows about them. So, why not do similar things to spread the word in other parts of the nation?

Television and radio is next. So many Swamis and preachers of all kinds have hour-long shows on Indian and even Western television and radio wherein they can talk about the Lord or the processes of yoga and self-realization. A temple can support a weekly radio or television show on cable TV, which by law must make its facilities available. This should be a focused endeavor in order to bring more people into the fold and educate people properly about Vedic culture.

These are just some of the ways to promote the temple and its facilities. Many more can be developed.

TEMPLES MUST SHARE METHODS THAT WORK

If temples develop new and effective ways to teach and uphold Vedic spiritual knowledge, then they should network with other temples and share their techniques and ideas. This is presently being done through annual conferences in the United States, by which an increasing

number of temples help share ideas, managerial processes, suggestions about legal and educational issues, and also how to further assist India in preserving its culture. There must be whole-hearted cooperation, knowing that we all need to work together to do something great and have a positive influence in this world. The more we work together in this way, the easier it becomes.

TEMPLES MUST HELP UNIFY PEOPLE

Temples must not only network together, but they must become more supportive of each other and cooperate together. For example, the temples in a community can all come together for at least one huge festival a year, such as a large Rathayatra festival. This can be the perfect example of how Hindus and devotees from all temples can gather, participate, and support each other in a huge show of unity. The press can be invited to show the cultural aspect of the festival, but to also show how such Dharmists and devotees have such strength in numbers. Thereafter, it also becomes much easier for the members of all temples to work together, especially if there is an issue that affects the whole Vedic community.

* * *

If every temple could apply these principles for the preservation, protection, and promotion of Vedic culture here in North America, and use similar techniques in India, we would see a tremendous growth of this spiritual knowledge and its values for the betterment of all people, not only on this continent but all over the world.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A Call to be Vedic Ambassadors

Now is the time when there is a growing need for what could be called Vedic Ambassadors, those who can represent and show the benefits of what the Vedic culture has to offer. In this age, when there is a concern for preserving, protecting, and disseminating Vedic culture and its vast knowledge on all aspects of life, there is a great need for those who follow Sanatana-dharma or Hinduism to be Vedic Ambassadors, or those who can fairly and accurately represent the Dharma. As we see society entering various states of confusion and anxiety over the circumstances that are happening all around the planet, the need for deeper spiritual understanding is obvious. Thus, there is a calling for Vedic Ambassadors who can assist in this way. But how can we be Vedic Ambassadors? What are the requirements?

To be a Vedic Ambassador is very easy. However, there are a few things to keep in mind to be one. First of all, to be an Ambassador of Vedic culture, one must know the culture and realize how dynamic it remains to be in its ability to assist humanity. Therefore, one must be educated in understanding what it is and the reasons for the different avenues of study it contains, such as in Ayurveda, Jyotish (Vedic astrology), Vastu (the means of arranging the space of one's home or office), the Vedic rituals and histories, and especially yoga and *sadhana* or spiritual practice and philosophy. There are a growing number of people in the West who are especially curious on the ways of making more personal spiritual development, and they often look to the Eastern philosophy for assistance. Thus, if you practice Hinduism or an aspect of Vedic culture, then as a Vedic Ambassador you should also be educated enough to assist others with proper advice when the opportunity arises. You should be able to explain what Vedic culture is and how it is a universal truth that anyone can utilize, and at least a little about what that truth contains.

This leads to the next point on being a Vedic Ambassador. An Ambassador for Vedic culture is also one who can show others how he or she has benefited from Vedic culture, and what it has done for him or her. All it takes is to share from your own personal experience any of the

ways that Vedic culture has improved or made a difference in your own life, both materially or spiritually. Everyone likes a story, so tell your story of how you started following the Vedic tradition and some of your experiences along the way. This means to show how the Vedic wisdom has assisted you in your search for truth, search or connection with God, in finding your spiritual identity, or to see the spiritual similarities we share with all other beings. Or how Vedic culture has helped you in finding where you fit into this universe and what is the aim of life. Or how it has helped improve your moral standards and view of compassion for others. These are just a few of the ways we can share the means by which following Vedic culture has improved our existence or made a difference in our approach to life. It does not take much to personally share with those we may meet these aspects of what Vedic knowledge has done for us.

The next step in being an Ambassador of Vedic culture is that you should also assist those who are sincerely interested and want to further their investigation of the Dharma. There will naturally be some who will want to investigate Vedic culture for themselves, especially after being impressed or convinced by what you have shared with them about it. So, you should be able to share the Dharma with them and empower them to begin following it. This may include various ways of directing them so they can further their own education about it or begin their own practice of it. This may be nothing more than suggesting various books they may find useful or beneficial for them to read, or which web sites may be good to visit. Or you may include instructions on how they can find a temple so they can start understanding the temple practice of Vedic *sadhana*. Or how to begin their study of basic Vedic scriptures so they can increase their understanding of what it has to offer and how to apply it in their lives. Thus, they become empowered to continue their own practice of it in a natural way.

The next step in being a Vedic Ambassador is to work together with other Dharmic friends who share the same concern for protecting and sharing the Dharma. This means to encourage others in their own practice and understanding of the Dharmic culture, or even to accept the idea of being a Vedic Ambassador. Then work together to develop a network in which everyone shares with others a greater understanding of what is actually Vedic culture and what it can do for society. This does not mean that it becomes a plan for converting those who may not be interested, but it is to assist society in the same way that Vedic culture has always tried to guide humanity for a better and improved

understanding of life. This is also the way to help establish an ideal global Dharmic family who share mutual respect for all.

BEING A VEDIC AMBASSADOR

In this way, there is a need for what I call Vedic Ambassadors. This is similar to the term Intellectual Kshatriyas, meaning those who are strong enough to stand up for Vedic Dharma. Thus, in summary:

1) As Vedic Ambassadors we should be educated in our culture,

2) We show and share with others how it has improved our own lives,

3) We do not proselytize, but we are ready and willing to open our doors to all community members to let them see what we have and even how they may also participate,

4) Network with other Dharmists in these matters to devise plans to further this work to protect and preserve the Dharma and disseminate its benefits throughout society,

5) Defend ourselves against the ignorance or simple misunderstanding of others,

6) Be pro-active both politically and socially. There are already organizations that are working in such ways in which we can participate.

7) We must also support our own community and its causes, and those programs that support and defend our culture. After all, we are here to pool our resources and channel them in a way for the upliftment of all people as well as for the protection of our own culture, Vedic Dharma.

8) We need to show the universal nature of the Vedic Dharma and how it is based on universal spiritual truths that are applicable to anyone from any background. It is such a dynamic culture that it is not only for a few Hindus, but for the spiritual progress of all humanity.

Therefore, with the help of such simple yet bold Vedic Ambassadors working together, the culture will not only remain strong but will increase in its influence and the ways it can provide assistance to all humanity, which was the reason why it was originally given to society by the Supreme and passed along by the great Vedic *rishis* and seers. By engaging ourselves in this way, we also enter the line of great *rishis* by doing our part in assisting their endeavor to pass along this knowledge and culture for the benefit of everyone.

We are a part of the hope for the future. We should have confidence in what we can do because history has shown that we have

already made a difference. In this way, if we all become Vedic Ambassadors, then you will see a great coalition that brings a bright future wherein people respect all beings and all religions. You will see a freedom for all individuals to develop according to the spiritual level most suitable for him or her. At that time, we will see a spiritual and cultural freedom like we have never known before. Then the universal spiritual truths as found and presented in the Vedic tradition will gain respect and be accepted by many more millions of people across the planet. This could certainly change the course of history and begin to manifest the spiritual dimension in this world.

Conclusion

In the end truth prevails, and this book and the information within it is an indication that the truth of India's history and the greatness of its Vedic traditions are finally coming to the fore again. As I stated in the beginning of this book, this is not an attempt to invoke old hatreds or vengeance, but it is a matter of making sure we remember what really happened to India and her people, and do not allow for the same mistakes to occur again, and to take notice of the freedom fighters who have worked and fought hard and even gave their lives for the future of India and our right to continue to observe and participate in the Vedic tradition. This is the real history of India, which must be retained. After all, the world remembers only what you let it not forget. These heroes who fought for the future of Sanatana-dharma are the examples of fearlessness and dedication, who were focused, strong, assertive, self-controlled, virtuous, self-reliant, and who strove for excellence in the same way we should be as taught by the principles of Vedic Dharma. This is the importance of truly following the Vedic path.

Within the Vedic system of daily practice or *sadhana* are the tools, such as *puja*, worship, yoga and meditation, bhakti or devotion, *pranayama*, philosophical understanding, etc., that can provide the means for us to perfect ourselves and reach a higher dimension of perception of who we are and our purpose in this world. This naturally brings with it fearlessness, self-confidence, assertiveness, inner peace, freedom from ignorance and limitations, and the empowerment to continue with our development and progress, and attain the Grace of God by our devotion. This will also allow us to work toward and attain any constructive goal, as we can see from the examples of the many previous acharyas and spiritual masters who have already done the same thing. This only shows that on the spiritual course of Sanatana-dharma and in the service of the Divine, anything is possible, up to and including *moksha*, or complete liberation from any further material existence and all its limitations.

If we can spread this consciousness, this will also bring about a new Era of Dharmic influence, free from the oppression of *adharma* or non-Dharmic cultures and religions who try to oppress anything different from them. But for this to happen, Dharmists or Hindus need to see clearly that there is nothing wrong with standing up for and working to preserve, protect, promote, and perpetuate the Vedic heritage and its

traditions. Other saints and Indian heroes have already shown this example. There is nothing wrong with sharing the profound and spiritual nature of the Vedic teachings, knowing that they have already benefitted thousands and millions of people, and can continue to benefit all of society. It is all in the presentation. If we can present this in an intelligent manner, or even simply share the basics of it from one person to another, then it will naturally be attractive, and people will want to know more about it. Not everyone may be ready for it, but everyone can use some aspect of it.

It is not the Vedic style to make unwilling converts, but the universal spiritual truths within can be useful for anyone, regardless of a person's background, culture, or religion. Thus, everyone can participate to whatever degree is right for them. That is the liberality, flexibility, and beauty of the Vedic system.

However, we need to realize that the Vedic culture is often more respectful toward other spiritual paths and the people who follow them than they are in return. Vedic Dharmists or Hindus have often gotten themselves into trouble because of this. Thus, there is a need to defend the Vedic tradition from those who, in their ignorance and lack of understanding, may want to destroy it. Dharma must be protected from *adharma*. We cannot be such humble Hindus that we allow others to come in and destroy us. What good would that do? We cannot humble ourselves out of our own existence. We must be willing to stand strong for Dharma. As Albert Einstein once said, "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."

Hindus, Vedic Dharmists, prefer to live in peace. They do not want to be aggressive toward others, and are usually not, but they also do not want to see people from other religions come to their country and try to make converts by falsely denigrating the Vedic culture. Why should they be provoked when they do not go around purposefully trying to provoke others by demeaning ones religion? Nonetheless, there may be times when we must be willing to stand up for what is right.

The way we can best make a stand for Vedic Dharma is to spread the Vedic spiritual knowledge and encourage people to participate in it. That can help people understand, maintain, and be convinced of the importance of the Dharmic culture. This is what I mean when I say that over the long term, a cultural revolution is better than a militant revolution. This is actually what has kept the Indian people dedicated to the Vedic traditions for so long, and it can continue to do so well into the future if we do our duty and promote the Vedic spiritual knowledge and

welcome anyone and everyone to participate. We can all be Vedic Ambassadors in this way.

Followers of Vedic Dharma must also become united. We must see beyond ethnic, national, class or caste divisions, and see ourselves as members of the Global Vedic Community, one family united in the universal spiritual knowledge that the Vedic scriptures advocate. We must see with this vision so our true spiritual potential is realized. This will create an air of positivity, which lends to an optimistic and constructive future for ourselves and the whole world. It is not enough to keep it to ourselves. But it is to our advantage when we work for the benefit of others and provide the means so that they can learn and participate in the Vedic traditions. This is Dharma, our Dharma, and Dharma will protect those who help protect it. That is one reason why it is *sanatana*, or that which exists eternally. Now let us do our part.

Dharma Rakshati Rakshitah

GLOSSARY

Acharya--the spiritual master who sets the proper standard by his own example.

Advaita--nondual, meaning that the Absolute Truth is one, and that there is no individuality between the Supreme Being and the individual souls which merge into oneness, the Brahman, when released from material existence. The philosophy taught by Sankaracharya.

Ahimsa--nonviolence.

Ananda--spiritual bliss.

Arati--the ceremony of worship when incense and ghee lamps are offered to the deities.

Arca-vigraha--the worshipable deity form of the Lord made of stone, wood, etc.

Aryan--a noble person, one who is on the Vedic path of spiritual advancement.

Ashrama--one of the four orders of spiritual life, such as *brahmacari* (celibate student), *grihastha* (married householder), *vanaprastha* (retired stage), and *sannyasa* (renunciate); or the abode of a spiritual teacher or *sadhu*.

Avatara--an incarnation of the Lord who descends from the spiritual world.

Aum--om or *pranava*

Ayodhya--the birthplace of Lord Rama in East India.

Ayurveda--the original wholistic form of medicine as described in the Vedic literature.

Bhagavan--one who possesses all opulences, God.

Bhajan--song of worship.

Bhajan kutir--a small dwelling used for one's worship and meditation.

Bhakta--a devotee of the Lord who is engaged in *bhakti-yoga*.

Bhakti--love and devotion for God.

Bhakti-yoga--the path of offering pure devotional service to the Supreme.

Brahma--the demigod of creation who was born from Lord Vishnu, the first created living being and the engineer of the secondary stage of creation of the universe when all the living entities were manifested.

Brahmachari--a celebate student, usually five to twenty-five years of age, who is trained by the spiritual master. One of the four divisions or *ashramas* of spiritual life.

Brahman--the spiritual energy; the all-pervading impersonal aspect of the Lord; or the Supreme Lord Himself.

Brahmana or brahmin--one of the four orders of society; the intellectual class of men who have been trained in the knowledge of the *Vedas* and initiated by a spiritual master.

Brahminical--to be clean and upstanding, both outwardly and inwardly, like a *brahmana* should be.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—considered the most recent incarnation of the Lord who appeared in the 15th century in Bengal and who originally started the *sankirtana* movement, based on congregational chanting of the holy names.

Darshan--the devotional act of seeing and being seen by the deity in the temple.

Deity--the *arca-vigraha*, or worshipful form of the Divinity in the temple.

Deva–a demigod, or higher being.

Dharma--the essential nature or duty of the living being.

Dvapara-yuga--the third age which lasts 864,000 years.

Ekadasi--a fast day on the eleventh day of the waxing and waning moon.

Ganesh--a son of Shiva, said to destroy obstacles (as Vinayaka) and offer good luck to those who petition him. It is generally accepted that the way Ganesh got the head of an elephant is that one time Parvati asked him to guard her residence. When Shiva wanted to enter, Ganesh stopped him, which made Shiva very angry. Not recognizing Ganesh, Shiva chopped off his head, which was then destroyed by one of Shiva's goblin associates. Parvati was so upset when she learned what had happened, Shiva, not being able to find Ganesh's original head, took the head of the first creature he saw, which was an elephant, and put it on the body of Ganesh and brought him back to life. The large mouse carrier of Ganesh symbolizes Ganesh's ability to destroy all obstacles, as rodents can gradually gnaw their way through most anything.

Ganges--the sacred and spiritual river which, according to the *Vedas*, runs throughout the universe, a portion of which is seen in India.

Grihastha--the householder order of life. One of the four *ashramas* in spiritual life.

Gunas--the modes of material nature of which there is *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance).

Guru--a spiritual master.

Incarnation--the taking on of a body or form.

Indra--the King of heaven and controller of rain, who by his great power conquers the forces of darkness.

ISKCON--International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Jagannatha----Krishna as Lord of the Universe, especially as worshipped in Jagannatha Puri.

Japa--the chanting one performs, usually softly, for one's own meditation.

Japa-mala--the string of beads one uses for chanting.

Jiva--the individual soul or living being.

Jivanmukta--a liberated soul, though still in the material body and universe.

Jizyah tax--tax on all non-Muslims for being a non-Muslim.

Jnana--knowledge which may be material or spiritual.

Kali-yuga--the fourth and present age, the age of quarrel and confusion, which lasts 432,000 years and began 5,000 years ago.

Kalki--future incarnation of Lord Vishnu who appears at the end of Kali-yuga.

Kalpa--a day in the life of Lord Brahma which lasts a thousand cycles of the four *yugas*.

Karma--material actions performed in regard to developing one's position or for future results which produce *karmic* reactions. It is also the reactions one endures from such fruitive activities.

Kirtana--chanting or singing the glories of the Lord.

Krishna--the name of the original Supreme Personality of Godhead which means the most attractive and greatest pleasure. He is the source of all other incarnations, such as Vishnu, Rama, Narasimha, Narayana, Buddha, Parashurama, Vamanadeva, Kalki at the end of Kali-yuga, etc.

Kshatriya--the second class of *varna* of society, or occupation of administrative or protective service, such as warrior or military personel.

Kumbha Mela--the holy festival in which millions of pilgrims and sages gather to bathe in the holy and purifying rivers for liberation at particular auspicious times that are calculated astrologically. The Kumbha Mela festivals take place every three years alternating between Allahabad, Nasik, Ujjain, and Hardwar.

Kuruksetra--the place of battle 5,000 years ago between the Pandavas and the Kauravas ninety miles north of New Delhi, where Krishna spoke the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Lakshmi--the goddess of fortune and wife of Lord Vishnu.

Mahabharata--the great epic of the Pandavas, which includes the *Bhagavad-gita*, by Vyasadeva.

Maha-mantra--the best *mantra* for self-realization in this age, called the Hare Krishna *mantra*.

Mandir--a temple.

Mantra--a sound vibration which prepares the mind for spiritual realization and delivers the mind from material inclinations. In some cases a *mantra* is chanted for specific material benefits.

Moksha--liberation from material existence.

Murti--a deity of the Lord or an image of a demigod or spiritual master that is worshiped.

Murugan--means the divine child, the Tamil name for Subramaniya, one of the sons of Shiva and Parvati, especially worshiped in South India.

Om or *Omkara--pranava*, the transcendental *om mantra*, generally referring to the attributeless or impersonal aspects of the Absolute.

Pandal--a large tent where religious gatherings are held.

Paramatma--the Supersoul, or localized expansion of the Lord.

Parampara--the system of disciplic succession through which transcendental knowledge descends.

Prana--the life air or cosmic energy.

Pranayama--control of the breathing process as in *astanga* or *raja-yoga*.

Prasada--food or other articles that have been offered to the deity in the temple and then distributed amongst people as the blessings or mercy of the deity.

Puja--the worship offered to the deity.

Pujari--the priest who performs worship, *puja*, to the deity.

Ramayana--the great epic of the incarnation of Lord Ramachandra.

Rishi--saintly person who knows the Vedic knowledge.

Sati--Shiva's wife who killed herself by immolation in fire.

Sadhana--a specific practice or discipline for attaining God realization.

Sadhu--Indian holy man or devotee.

Samadhi--trance, the perfection of being absorbed in the Absolute.

Sanatana-dharma--the eternal nature of the living being, to love and render service to the supreme lovable object, the Lord.

Sannyasa--the renounced order of life, the highest of the four *ashramas* on the spiritual path.

Satya-yuga--the first of the four ages which lasts 1,728,000 years.

Shastra--the authentic revealed Vedic scripture.

Shiva--the benevolent one, the demigod who is in charge of the material mode of ignorance and the destruction of the universe. Part of the triad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva who continually create, maintain, and destroy the universe. He is known as Rudra when displaying his destructive aspect.

Srimad-Bhagavatam--the most ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge compiled by Vyasadeva.

Sudra--the working class of society, the fourth of the *varnas*.

Svami--one who can control his mind and senses.

Tamo-guna--the material mode of ignorance.

Tilok--the clay markings that signify a person's body as a temple, and the sect or school of thought of the person.

Treta-yuga--the second of the four ages which lasts 1,296,000 years.

Upanishads--the portions of the *Vedas* which primarily explain philosophically the Absolute Truth. Except for the *Isa Upanishad*, which is the 40th chapter of the *Vajasaneyi Samhita* of the *Sukla* (*White*) *Yajur-veda*, the *Upanishads* are connected to the four primary *Vedas*, generally found in the *Brahmanas*.

Vaishnava--a worshiper of the Supreme Lord Vishnu or Krishna and His expansions or incarnations.

Vaisya--the third class of society engaged in business or farming.

Vanaprastha--the third of the four *ashramas* of spiritual life in which one retires from family life in preparation for the renounced order.

Varna--sometimes referred to as caste, a division of society, such as *brahmana* (a priestly intellectual), a *kshatriya* (ruler or manager), *v aisya* (a merchant, banker, or farmer), and *sudra* (common laborer).

Varnashrama--the system of four divisions of society and four orders of spiritual life.

Vedas--generally means the four primary *samhitas; Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva*.

Vishnu--the expansion of Lord Krishna who enters into the material energy to create and maintain the cosmic world.

Yoga--linking up with the Absolute.

REFERENCES

Advanced History of India, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1970.

Akbar the Great, Volume One, A. L. Shrivatava, Shiv Lal Agarwal and Co. Agra.

Akbar, The Great Mogul, V. Smith, 2nd Edition, S. Chand and Co., Delhi, 1958.

Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, (2 volumes) James Todd, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1957.

Atrocities on Hindus by Missionaries in Goa, by V. Sundaram.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is, translated by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, New York/Los Angeles, 1972

Defense of Hindu Society, Sita Ram Goel, Voice of India, New Delhi,

Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India, D. H Buchanan.

Economic Development of the Overseas Empire, L. C. A Knowles.

Expansion of England, J. R. Seeley.

Freedom Struggle in India, M. M. Ahluwalia.

Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times, W. Cunningham.

Harvesting Our Souls, Arun Shourie, ASA Publications, New Delhi, 2000.

Hindu Society Under Siege, Sita Ram Goel, Voice of India, New Delhi.

Hindus in South Asia and the Diaspora: A Survey of Human Rights 2006, by the Hindu American Foundation, Kensington, MD, www.hafsite.org.

History of British India, H. H. Wilson.

India: A History, John Keay, Grove Press, New York, 2000.

India: The Definitive History, D. R. SarDesai, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 2008.

India, What can it teach us? By F. Max Muller, Published by Rupa & Co., New Delhi, reprint in 2002

In Search of the Indo-Europeans, J.P.Mallory, Thames & Hudson, New York, 1989

In Spite of the Gods, Edward Luce, Doubleday, New York, 2007.

Islam, Alfred Guillaume, Penguin Books Ltd., Hammomnds Worth, Middlesex, UK, 1954

Hymns of the Rig-veda, tr. by Griffith, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1973

Mahabharata, Kesari Mohan Ganguli, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt., Ltd., New Delhi, 1970

Rewriting Indian History, Francois Gautier.
Srimad-Bhagavatam, translated by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, Bhaktivedanta Book trust, New York/Los Angeles, 1972
The Bloodless Revolution, by Tristam Stuart, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2006.
The Law of Civilization and Decline, Brooks Adams.
The Great Hedge of India, Roy Moxham, Carroll & Graf publishers, New York, 2001.
The Migration of British Capital, L. H. Jenks.
The Sikhs in History, Sangat Singh, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2005.
The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India, Sita Ram Goel, Voice of India, New Delhi.
The True History and Religion of India, by Swami Prakashanand Saraswati, International Society of Divine Love, Austin, Texas, 1999.
The Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India, Khambata Shah.
Voiceless India, G. Emerson.

Further statistics and data for the colonial period taken from Rajni-Palme Dutt's *India Today* (Indian Edition published in 1947); also see N.K. Sinha's *Economic History of Bengal* (Published in Calcutta, 1956); and *Late Victorian Holocausts* by Mike Davis.

INDEX

Acharya Sabha..... 216
Afghanistan. 220
  its conquest. 34
Agricultural system. 107
Akbar..... 60
  false claims of greatness.. 63
Alauddin..... 50
Alexander. 29
Alexander the Great
  renamed River Sindhu to Indu. 269
Alptigin the Turk..... 34
Ambedkar..... 121
America
  more freedom to practice Vedic culture. 100
Andhra Pradesh
  temple property sold. 206
Annie Besant. 16, 104, 115
Arjuna. 7
Arunachal Pradesh..... 180
Arya Samaj..... 114
Aryan..... 150
Aryan invasion
  has no basis..... 149
  the idea is because of a misinterpretation of the Vedas..... 144
Aryan invasion theory. 102, 142
Aryan invasion,
  was a theory hypothesized in the nineteenth century..... 144
Aryans
  the Asiatic origin of the Aryans is hypothesis.150
Ashramas..... 157
Assam..... 185
Aurangzeb. 66
Aurobindo Ghose. 111, 114
Ayodhya
  plundered by Aurangzeb. 71
Ayurveda. 287
  revival of..... 4
Azamshah
  Aurangzeb's son. 77
Babar. 59
Bahadur Shah II..... 109
Bahadur Shah Zafar
  the last Mughal emperor. 67
Bahamanis. 74
Bahmani sultans. 35
Bal Gangadhar Tilak. 111
Balaji Vishvanath
  defeated Mughal army in Delhi..... 77
Bangladesh. 41, 220
Battle of the ten kings,..... 144
Belittling Vedic culture. 141
Benazir Bhutto. 230
Bhagavad-gita..... 6
Bhutan. 221
Bihar
  temple take overs. 210
Bishara Mahanty
  the devotee who saved Lord Jagannatha. 73
Blind faith. 20
Bonded labor. 247
Book distribution..... 307
Brahmachari. 152
Brahmanas..... 152, 155
Brahmo Samaj. 113
British
  attempts to divide and conquer India..... 94

destroyed many Sanskrit works. 98
divide and rule policy.... 110
economic exploitation... 111
misrepresented Vedic culture..... 98
tried to lead people away from Vedic culture. 177
British East Company..... 105
British East India Company... 83
started in 1600. 96
British in colonial India. 92
British Indian Empire
ended August 14, 1947. 123
Bureaucratic corruption. 225
Cardinal Ratzinger..... 24
Caste system. 152
early degradation..... 35
Catholic Church
not a friend to other religions..... 12
Chandra Gupta. 31
Chidambaram attacked. 53
Child labor..... 245
Children
educating them in Vedic Dharma. 323
China
in Tibet..... 238
Chittor attack
in 1303. 51
Chittorgarh
Akbar's order to massacre the people. 61
Christian
conversion tactics..... 195
Christian chronology,
00 AM on October 23, 4004 B.C.. 145
Christian conversion tactics... 10
Christian education..... 13
Christian militants. 183
Christian population
in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. 12
Christianity
Westerners leaving it..... 201
Cleanliness in India. 240
Communists..... 175
Congress party. 178
Constitution of India..... 202
Conversioin tactics. 10
Conversion. 198
methods used. 186
the damage done. 186
Conversions
by the Portuguese..... 84
counteracting in villages.305
Cultural presentations..... 328
Cultural revolution. 7, 316
Customs Line..... 128
Cyrus the Great..... 29
Dahir of the Chach dynasty. .. 32
Dalai Lama. 223
Dalits
after conversion..... 11
Dandi salt march..... 136
Defending Vedic Dharma.... 259
Dharasan salt raid. 137
Dharma
brings harmony. 264
defending it. 217
meaning of. 3
what it means. 126
Dioramas. 331
Dowry..... 243
Dravidian..... 150
Dutch East India Company.... 82
Dwarka
attacked by Mahmoud Begrha. 59
East India Company. ... 105, 129

Ekal Vidyalaya. 252, 314
Ellora
temples destroyed by Aurangzeb. 71
English language
helped spread Vedic culture. 99
Ethnic cleansing
in Kashmir. 215
Exhibits
at the temple..... 331
Farming. 254
Fiji Islands. 222
Firuoz Shah Tughlaq. 53
Firuz Shah Tughlaq. 40
Food distribution programs. 309
Foreign policy..... 223
Francis Xavier. 13, 83
instigator of the Goan Inquisition. 85
Gandhi. 124
how he became convinced of vegetarianism. 103
returned to India in 1915.115
Salt March..... 120
Ganga River. 240
Gemology. 287
Girls
Saving them. 241
Global Hindu Heritage Foundation. 314
Global Vedic Community..... 16
Global Vedic or Dharmic Community. 7
Goa. 81
Goan Inquisition. 85
Golwalker, Madhav Sadashiva. .. 119
Govindaji temple in Vrindavana
destroyed by Aurangzeb.. 67
Great Hedge of India. 128
Grihastha. 152
Guru Arjun Dev. 64
Guru Govind Singh. 72
Guru Tegh Bahadur. 69
Harappa. 147
Harappa,. 147
skeletal remains..... 149
the horse at these sites... 149
Harappan society. 149
Hasan Gangu
founder of the Bahamanis.74
Heaven
the concept changes. 22
Hedgewar, Doctor Keshav Baliram. 118
Hindu
70% majority in India. 15
Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha.. 210
Hindu population
lost 80 million in 500 years 35
Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act..... 206
Hindu temples. 316
Hinduism
its value. 16
meaning of the term. 269
Hindus
are in deep slumber. 210
must act now. 15
must speak out. 211
nonchalant toward other religions. 11
Holocausts in India. 215
Homeless people..... 248
India
became independent August 14, 1947. 123
cultural heritage has slipped away. 98

how British attempted to divide and conquer it. 94
losing its Vedic culture. .. 13
India's history. 43
India's politicians. 224
Indian Association (Bharat Sabha). 112
Indian constitution
does not support Vedic culture..... 211
should provide uniform code. 212
Indian dance. 286
Indian government
jeopardizing Hinduism.. 206
Indian media
anti-Hindu bias..... 210
Indian National Congress. ... 112
Indias ancient territory. 30
Indias elite. 175
Indias leaders
are weak. 223
Indo-European civilization
nothing but the worldwide Vedic culture. 149
Indo-European language143, 151
Indus Valley
the culture goes back earlier than 6000 BCE.. 148
the known cities of this civilization. 145
Indus Valley seals. 148
of Vedic Sanskrit origin. 149
Invaders into India
earliest were defeated. 29
Islam
entered India in 712 CE.. 32
Islamic history
Kamil-ut-Tawarikh. 47
Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh. 48
Sirat-i-Firuz Shahi..... 54
Tarikh-i-Yamini. 44
Islamic invaders
their real intentions. 38
Islamic invasions
one of the bloodiest stories in world history. 39
Islmic history
Kitabu'l-Yamini. 44
Jagannatha in Puri
burned by Muslims. 73
Jagannatha Puri attacked
in 1360. 54
Jahangir. 63
Jalaluddin Khalji. 50
Jallianwala Bagh
the slaughter at. 116
Jammu. 220
Jews
never forget holocausts. 215
Jinnah. 41, 120, 124, 228
Jyotish. 287
Kalaripayat
martial arts. 4
Kanauj. 45
Karnataka
collection of funds from Hindu temples. 209
Kashmir. 126, 220, 228
accession to India. 229
first invasion from Pakistan 228
Kerala. 209
Keshava temple in Mathura
destroyed by Aurangzeb.. 68
Khaljis. 50
Khilafat movement. 118
Khonsa. 183
King Porus..... 29
Krishna
married Rukmini in Arunachal Pradesh. 182

Kshatriyas. 152, 155
Kurukshetra War. 6
Lakshmanananda Saraswati
Swami..... 199
Legal system. 227
Literacy..... 251
Lodis..... 58
Lord Krishna. 6
Macaulays intention..... 94
Madame Cama..... 115
Mahabharata War
3139 BCE. 98
Maharaja Pariksit..... 164
Maharasthra
Hindu temple take overs.209
Mahatma Gandhi
disliked Christians..... 91
Mahmoud Ghazni..... 34, 40, 43
Malaysia. 222
Malik Naib
alias Malik Kaffur. 53
Malnutrition..... 250, 309
Manipur. 185
Maratha dynasties. 75
Mathura
attacked by Sikandar Lodi58
plundered by Aurangzeb. 68
the Muslim attack on..... 45
Mauryan Empire. 31
Max Muller..... 102
Max Muller,
his real goal for translating
the Vedas..... 102, 145
Medical assistance. 309
Medical system
in ancient India. 285
Mehrgarh,. 148
Mentoring programs. 324
Mir Kasim. 130
Mizoram. 185
Mohenjo-Daro. 147
Mohenjo-Daro,. 145, 147
Mountbatten. 124
Mughal Empire
how it fell apart. 79
Mughals. 59
Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji. 48
Muhammad bin Kasim. 32
Muhammad bin Tughlaq. 53
Muhammad Ghuri. 34, 47
Muslim histories
Tarikh-i-Wassaf. 41
Muslim League. 120
Muslims
attacked anything non-
Islamic. 31
cooperated with the British
..... 114
cooperated with the Indian
National Congress. . 115
Mutiny of 1857. 106
Nagaland. 195
Narasinghpur
temples destroyed by
Aurangzeb. 71
Nardin..... 44
Nehru
remembrance of Mahmoud
Ghazni. 179
Nehru, Indira. 118
Nehru, Jawaharlal. 118
Nehru, Motilal. 118
Never give up
maintaining Vedic culture.79
Orissa
selling temple lands. 210
Overpopulation. 253
Pakistan. 41, 221
its threat to India. 227
the loss of Hindu people.124
Pandharpur
temples destroyed by

Aurangzeb. 71
Paramahamsa Ramakrishna. 113
Parents
teaching the children..... 292
Pilgrimages
arranged by temples. 336
Portuguese. 81
Portuguese Catholic Church
war against Hindus..... 90
Poverty. 255
Prarthana Samaj..... 113
Prison of Religion..... 19
Prithiviraj Chauhan. 47
Promotion. 336
Properly handling the press. 260
Protest rallies. 310
Purusha Sukta..... 162
Queen Elizabeth
gave charter in 1600 to East India Company. 106
Queen Semiramis. 29
Qutbuddin Aibak..... 47
Rabindranath Tagore. 113
Rajasthan
to auction temples. 210
Rajput states. 35
Ram Janma Bhoomi. 71
Ramanujacharya
crusaded against casteism169
Rana Pratap. 62
Rani of Jhansi..... 109
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. . 118
Raziya..... 49
Reginald Dyer. 116
Rig-veda
existing for thousands of years before Indus Valley seals 149
Robert Clive. 107, 129
Salt
the need for it. 132
Salt March. 120
Salt tax..... 131
Sanatana-dharma. 3
its real meaning. 264
meant for the whole world 274
Sannyasa..... 152
Sarasvati River,
stopped flowing and later dried up. 146
Saraswati River
dried around 1900 B.C.. 150
Scheduled Castes..... 167
Schlegel. 101
School text books. 294
Service or seva..... 324
Shah Jahan..... 65
Shambaji
captured by Aurangzeb. .. 71
Shivaji's son. 77
Shamika Rishi. 164
Shamsuddin Iltutmish..... 48
Sher Shah. 60
Shivaji. 75
Shudras..... 152, 155
Shulba Sutras..... 284
Shulbasutras,. 148
Sir William Jones. 151
Slaughterhouses..... 107
Somnath
the attack in 1026..... 46
Somnath attack
in 1298. 50
Somnath attacked
in 1392 and 1401. 56
Southern Baptists..... 9
Spiritual education
providing people with. .. 306
Spiritual revolution
in India..... 297

Sri Lanka. 222
Subhash Chandra Bose. 118, 121, 122
Subuktigin. 34
Sultanate of Delhi. 49
Support groups. 333
Surgeries
in 600 BCE. 285
Swami Dayananda Saraswati 114, 216
Swamis
visiting the villages. 300
Swaraj Party. 118
Tatia Tope. 108
Temple ashramas. 325
Temple classes. 307, 320
Temple gift shops. 331
Temples
for the villages. 302
must be open to everyone 304
Terrorism in and around India 219
Thanesar. 44
The Jesuits
conversions. 84
Thomas the apostle. 85
Timur-I-lang. 56
Tirumala-Tirupati temple. ... 207
Training temple priests. 308
Tryambakeshwar
temples destroyed by Aurangzeb. 71
Tughlaqs. 53
Tyranny warning signs. 52
Udaipur
raids on temples of. 70
Ujjain attacked
in 1304. 51
Unity amongst Hindus
the great need. 216
Vaishyas. 152, 155
Vanaprastha. 152
Vanivasi Kalyan Ashrama. .. 194
Varanasi 47
plundered by Aurangzeb. 68
Varna. 157
Varnashrama 152, 155
Vasco de Gama 81
Vedic Ambassadors. 339
Vedic art. 285
Vedic culture. 4
freedom of inquiry. 25
its importance. 16
last bastion of deep spiritual truth. 18
what is it 262
Vedic dance. 286
Vedic knowledge
popular in the world. 283
Vedic literature
composed at least sometime before 4000 B.C. ... 150
Vedic mathematics. 283
Vedic path
allows complete freedom to investigate. 19
Vedic religion,
at the Harappan sites. 148
Vedic temples. 316
Vedic tradition
respects numerous forms of God. 39
Vegetarianism in England
because of Vedic culture. 103
Vijayanagar Empire. 54
Vijayanagara Empire. 75
Villages
organizing them. 301
Villages of India
a spiritual revolution. 297
Vivekananda 113

Vivekananda Kendra. 192
Vstu. 287
Warren Hastings. 134
Water problems. 254
Weakness of India
against early invaders. 36
Westerners
interested in Vedic tradition
..... 100
World press. 218
World War II. 121
Xavier, Francis. 83
Yamuna River. 240
Youth
educating them in Vedic
Dharma. 323
giving Vedic culture to
them. 290

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Knapp grew up in a Christian family, during which time he seriously studied the Bible to understand its teachings. In his late teenage years, however, he sought answers to questions not easily explained in Christian theology. So he began to search through other religions and philosophies from around the world and started to find the answers for which he was looking. He also studied a variety of occult sciences, ancient mythology, mysticism, yoga, and the spiritual teachings of the East. After his first reading of the *Bhagavad-gita*, he felt he had found the last piece of the puzzle he had been putting together through all of his research. Therefore, he continued to study all of the major Vedic texts of India to gain a better understanding of the Vedic science.

It is known amongst all Eastern mystics that anyone, regardless of qualifications, academic or otherwise, who does not engage in the spiritual practices described in the Vedic texts cannot actually enter into understanding the depths of the Vedic spiritual science, nor acquire the realizations that should accompany it. So, rather than pursuing his research in an academic atmosphere at a university, Stephen directly engaged in the spiritual disciplines that have been recommended for hundreds of years. He continued his study of Vedic knowledge and spiritual practice under the guidance of a spiritual master. Through this process, and with the sanction of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, he became initiated into the genuine and authorized spiritual line of the Brahma-Madhava-Gaudiya *sampradaya*, which is a disciplic succession that descends back through Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Vyasadeva, the compiler of Vedic literature, and further back to Sri Krishna. Through this initiation he has taken the spiritual name of Sri Nandanandana dasa. Besides being *brahminically* initiated, Stephen has also been to India numerous times and traveled extensively throughout the country, visiting all but three small states, and most of the major holy places, thus gaining a wide variety of spiritual experiences that only such places can give.

Stephen has written numerous articles, as well as books such as *The Eastern Answers to the Mysteries of Life* series, which includes *The Secret Teachings of the Vedas*, *The Universal Path to Enlightenment*, *The Vedic Prophecies*, and *How the Universe was Created and Our Purpose In It.* He has also written *Toward World Peace: Seeing the Unity Between Us All*, *Facing Death: Welcoming the Afterlife*, *The Key to Real Happiness*, and *Proof of Vedic Culture's Global Existence*., as well as *Reincarnation and Karma: How They Really Affect Us*, *The*

Heart of Hinduism, *Vedic Culture: The Difference it can Make in Your Life*, *The Power of the Dharma: A Short Introduction to Hinduism and Vedic Culture*, and *Seeing Spiritual India: A Guidebook to Temple, Holy sites, Festivals and Traditions*. Also, *Yoga and Meditation: Their Real Purpose and How to Get Started*, and *Avatars, Gods and Goddesses of Vedic Culture*.

Furthermore, he has authored a novel, *Destined for Infinity*, for those who prefer lighter reading, or learning spiritual knowledge in the context of an exciting, spiritual adventure. Stephen has put the culmination of over thirty years of continuous research and travel experience into his books in an effort to share it with those who are also looking for spiritual understanding. More books are forthcoming, so stay in touch through his website to find out further developments at: http://www.stephen-knapp.com, and at his bolg at: http://stephenknapp.wordpress.com.

If you have enjoyed this book, or if you are serious about finding higher levels of real spiritual Truth, and learning more about the mysteries of India's Vedic culture, then you will also want to get other books written by Stephen Knapp, which include:

The Secret Teachings of the Vedas

This book presents the essence of the ancient Eastern philosophy and summarizes some of the most elevated and important of all spiritual knowledge. This enlightening information is explained in a clear and concise way and is essential for all who want to increase their spiritual understanding, regardless of what their religious background may be. If you are looking for a book to give you an in-depth introduction to the Vedic spiritual knowledge, and to get you started in real spiritual understanding, this is the book!

The topics include: What is your real spiritual identity; the Vedic explanation of the soul; scientific evidence that consciousness is separate from but interacts with the body; the real unity between us all; how to attain the highest happiness and freedom from the cause of suffering; the law of karma and reincarnation; the karma of a nation; where you are really going in life; the real process of progressive evolution; life after death—heaven, hell, or beyond; a description of the spiritual realm; the nature of the Absolute Truth—personal God or impersonal force; recognizing the existence of the Supreme; the reason why we exist at all; and much more. This book provides the answers to questions not found in other religions or philosophies, and condenses information from a wide variety of sources that would take a person years to assemble. It also contains many quotations from the Vedic texts to let the texts speak for themselves, and to show the knowledge the Vedas have held for thousands of years. It also explains the history and origins of the Vedic literature. This book has been called one of the best reviews of Eastern philosophy available.

Available through Amazon.com and through Jaico Publishing house in Mumbai at www.jaicobooks.com.

The Vedic Prophecies:
A New Look into the Future

The Vedic prophecies take you to the end of time! This is the first book ever to present the unique predictions found in the ancient Vedic texts of India. These prophecies are like no others and will provide you with a very different view of the future and how things fit together in the plan for the universe.

Now you can discover the amazing secrets that are hidden in the oldest spiritual writings on the planet. Find out what they say about the distant future, and what the seers of long ago saw in their visions of the destiny of the world.

This book will reveal predictions of deteriorating social changes and how to avoid them; future droughts and famines; low-class rulers and evil governments; whether there will be another appearance (second coming) of God; and predictions of a new spiritual awareness and how it will spread around the world. You will also learn the answers to such questions as:

- Does the future get worse or better?
- Will there be future world wars or global disasters?
- What lies beyond the predictions of Nostradamus, the Mayan prophecies, or the Biblical apocalypse?
- Are we in the end times? How to recognize them if we are.
- Does the world come to an end? If so, when and how?

Now you can find out what the future holds. The Vedic Prophecies carry an important message and warning for all humanity, which needs to be understood now!

Available through Amazon.com.

Proof of Vedic Culture's Global Existence

This book provides evidence which makes it clear that the ancient Vedic culture was once a global society. Even today we can see its influence in any part of the world. Thus, it becomes obvious that before the world became full of distinct and separate cultures, religions and countries, it was once united in a common brotherhood of Vedic culture, with common standards, principles, and representations of God.

No matter what we may consider our present religion, society or country, we are all descendants of this ancient global civilization. Thus, the Vedic culture is the parent of all humanity and the original ancestor of all religions. In this way, we all share a common heritage.

This book is an attempt to allow humanity to see more clearly its universal roots. This book provides a look into:

- How Vedic knowledge was given to humanity by the Supreme.
- The history and traditional source of the Vedas and Vedic Aryan society.
- Who were the original Vedic Aryans. How Vedic society was a global influence and what shattered this world-wide society. How Sanskrit faded from being a global language.
- Many scientific discoveries over the past several centuries are only rediscoveries of what the Vedic literature already knew.
- How the origins of world literature are found in India and Sanskrit.
- The links between the Vedic and other ancient cultures, such as the Sumerians, Persians, Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, and others.
- Links between the Vedic tradition and Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.
- How many of the western holy sites, churches, and mosques were once the sites of Vedic holy places and sacred shrines.
- The Vedic influence presently found in such countries as Britain, France, Russia, Greece, Israel, Arabia, China, Japan, and in areas of Scandinavia, the Middle East, Africa, the South Pacific, and the Americas.
- Uncovering the truth of India's history: Powerful evidence that shows how many mosques and Muslim buildings were once opulent Vedic temples, including the Taj Mahal, Delhi's Jama Masjid, Kutab Minar, as well as buildings in many other cities, such as Agra, Ahmedabad, Bijapur, etc.
- How there is presently a need to plan for the survival of Vedic culture.

This book is sure to provide some amazing facts and evidence about the truth of world history and the ancient, global Vedic Culture. This book has enough startling information and historical evidence to cause a major shift in the way we view religious history and the basis of world traditions.

Available through Amazon.com, and on Lulu.com as E-book.

Toward World Peace: Seeing the Unity Between Us All

This book points out the essential reasons why peace in the world and cooperation amongst people, communities, and nations have been so difficult to establish. It also advises the only way real peace and harmony amongst humanity can be achieved.

In order for peace and unity to exist we must first realize what barriers and divisions keep us apart. Only then can we break through those barriers to see the unity that naturally exists between us all. Then, rather than focus on our differences, it is easier to recognize our similarities and common goals. With a common goal established, all of humanity can work together to help each other reach that destiny.

This book is short and to the point. It is a thought provoking book and will provide inspiration for anyone. It is especially useful for those working in politics, religion, interfaith, race relations, the media, the United Nations, teaching, or who have a position of leadership in any capacity. It is also for those of us who simply want to spread the insights needed for bringing greater levels of peace, acceptance, unity, and equality between friends, neighbours, and communities. Such insights include:

- The factors that keep us apart.
- Breaking down cultural distinctions.
- Breaking down the religious differences.
- Seeing through bodily distinctions.
- We are all working to attain the same things.
- Our real identity: The basis for common ground.
- Seeing the Divinity within each of us.
- What we can do to bring unity between everyone we meet.

This book carries an important message and plan of action that we must incorporate into our lives and plans for the future if we intend to ever bring peace and unity between us.

Available through Amazon.com and E-book at Lulu.com.

Facing Death
Welcoming the Afterlife

Many people are afraid of death, or do not know how to prepare for it nor what to expect. So this book is provided to relieve anyone of the fear that often accompanies the thought of death, and to supply a means to more clearly understand the purpose of it and how we can use it to our advantage. It will also help the survivors of the departed souls to better understand what has happened and how to cope with it. Furthermore, it shows that death is not a tragedy, but a natural course of events meant to help us reach our destiny.

This book is easy to read, with soothing and comforting wisdom, along with stories of people who have been with departing souls and what they have experienced. It is written especially for those who have given death little thought beforehand, but now would like to have some preparedness for what may need to be done regarding the many levels of the experience and what might take place during this transition.

To assist you in preparing for your own death, or that of a loved one, you will find guidelines for making one's final days as peaceful and as smooth as possible, both physically and spiritually. Preparing for deathcan transform your whole outlook in a positive way, if understood properly. Some of the topics in the book include:

- The fear of death and learning to let go.
- The opportunity of death: The portal into the next life.
- This earth and this body are no one's real home, so death is natural.
- Being practical and dealing with the final responsibilities.
- Forgiving yourself and others before you go.
- Being the assistant of one leaving this life.
- Connecting with the person inside the disease.
- Surviving the death of a loved one.
- Stories of being with dying, and an amazing near-death-experience.
- Connecting to the spiritual side of death.
- What happens while leaving the body.
- What difference the consciousness makes during death, and how to attain the best level of awareness to carry you through it, or what death will be like and how to prepare for it, this book will help you.

Published by iUniverse.com in the USA as paperback and E-book.

Destined for Infinity

Deep within the mystical and spiritual practices of India are doors that lead to various levels of both higher and lower planes of existence. Few people from the outside are ever able to enter into the depths of these practices to experience such levels of reality.

This is the story of the mystical adventure of a man, Roman West, who entered deep into the secrets of India where few other Westerners have been able to penetrate. While living with a master in the Himalayan foothills and traveling the mystical path that leads to the Infinite, he witnesses the amazing powers the mystics can achieve and undergoes some of the most unusual experiences of his life. Under the guidance of a master that he meets in the mountains, he gradually develops mystic abilities of his own and attains the sacred vision of the enlightened sages and enters the unfathomable realm of Infinity. However, his peaceful life in the hills comes to an abrupt end when he is unexpectedly forced to confront the powerful forces of darkness that have been unleashed by an evil Tantric priest to kill both Roman and his master. His only chance to defeat the intense forces of darkness depends on whatever spiritual strength he has been able to develop.

This story includes traditions and legends that have existed for hundreds and thousands of years. All of the philosophy, rituals, mystic powers, forms of meditation, and descriptions of the Absolute are authentic and taken from narrations found in many of the sacred books of the East, or gathered by the author from his own experiences in India and information from various sages themselves.

This book will prepare you to perceive the multi-dimensional realities that exist all around us, outside our sense perception. This is a book that will give you many insights into the broad possibilities of our life and purpose in this world.

Published by iUniverse.com in the USA as paperback and E-book.

Reincarnation and Karma: How They Really Affect Us

Everyone may know a little about reincarnation, but few understand the complexities and how it actually works. Now you can find out how reincarnation and karma really affect us. Herein all of the details are provided on how a person is implicated for better or worse by their own actions. You will understand why particular situations in life happen, and how to make improvements for one's future. You will see why it appears that bad things happen to good people, or even why good things happen to bad people, and what can be done about it.

Other topics include:

- Reincarnation recognized throughout the world
- The most ancient teachings on reincarnation
- Reincarnation in Christianity
- How we transmigrate from one body to another
- Life between lives
- Going to heaven or hell
- The reason for reincarnation
- Free will and choice
- Karma of the nation
- How we determine our own destiny
- What our next life may be like
- Becoming free from all karma and how to prepare to make our next life the best possible.

Combine this with modern research into past life memories and experiences and you will have a complete view of how reincarnation and karma really operate.

Published by iUniverse.com as paperback and E-book.

Vedic Culture
The Difference It Can Make In Your Life

The Vedic culture of India is rooted in Sanatana-dharma, the eternal and universal truths that are beneficial to everyone. It includes many avenues of self-development that an increasing number of people from the West are starting to investigate and use, including:

- Yoga
- Meditation and spiritual practice
- Vedic astrology
- Ayurveda
- Vedic gemology
- Vastu or home arrangement
- Environmental awareness
- Vegetarianism
- Social cooperation and arrangement
- The means for global peace
- And much more

Vedic Culture: The Difference It Can Make In Your Life shows the advantages of the Vedic paths of improvement and self-discovery that you can use in your life to attain higher personal awareness, happiness, and fulfillment. It also provides a new view of what these avenues have to offer from some of the most prominent writers on Vedic culture in the West, who discovered how it has affected and benefited their own lives. They write about what it has done for them and then explain how their particular area of interest can assist others. The noted authors include, David Frawley, Subhash Kak, Chakrapani Ullal, Michael Cremo, Jeffrey Armstrong, Robert Talyor, Howard Beckman, Andy Fraenkel, George Vutetakis, Pratichi Mathur, Dhan Rousse, Arun Naik, Parama Karuna Devi, and Stephen Knapp, all of whom have numerous authored books or articles of their own.

For the benefit of individuals and social progress, the Vedic system is as relevant today as it was in ancient times. Discover why there is a growing renaissance in what the Vedic tradition has to offer in *Vedic Culture*.

Published by iUniverse.com in the USA as paperback and E-book.

The Heart of Hinduism:

The Eastern Path to Freedom, Empowerment and Illumination

This is a definitive and easy to understand guide to the essential as well as devotional heart of the Vedic/Hindu philosophy. You will see the depths of wisdom and insights that are contained within this profound spiritual knowledge. It is especially good for anyone who lacks the time to research the many topics that are contained within the numerous Vedic manuscripts and to see the advantages of knowing them. This also provides you with a complete process for progressing on the spiritual path, making way for individual empowerment, freedom, and spiritual illumination. All the information is now at your fingertips.

Some of the topics you will find include:

- A complete review of all the Vedic texts and the wide range of topics they contain. This also presents the traditional origins of the Vedic philosophy and how it was developed, and their philosophical conclusion.
- The uniqueness and freedom of the Vedic system.
- A description of the main yoga processes and their effectiveness.
- A review of the Vedic Gods, such as Krishna, Shiva, Durga, Ganesh, and others. You will learn the identity and purpose of each.
- You will have the essential teachings of Lord Krishna who has given some of the most direct and insightful of all spiritual messages known to humanity, and the key to direct spiritual perception.
- The real purpose of yoga and the religious systems.
- What is the most effective spiritual path for this modern age and what it can do for you, with practical instructions for deep realizations.
- The universal path of devotion, the one world religion.
- How Vedic culture is the last bastion of deep spiritual truth.
- Plus many more topics and information for your enlightenment.

So to dive deep into what is Hinduism and the Vedic path to freedom and spiritual perception, this book will give you a jump start. Knowledge is the process of personal empowerment, and no knowledge will give you more power than deep spiritual understanding. And those realizations described in the Vedic culture are the oldest and some of the most profound that humanity has ever known.

Published by iUniverse.com in the USA in paperback and E-book, and by Brajbihari Lal & Sons in Vrindavana, India.

The Power of the Dharma

An Introduction to Hinduism and Vedic Culture

The Power of the Dharma offers you a concise and easy-to-understand overview of the essential principles and customs of Hinduism and the reasons for them. It provides many insights into the depth and value of the timeless wisdom of Vedic spirituality and why the Dharmic path has survived for so many hundreds of years. It reveals why the Dharma is presently enjoying a renaissance of an increasing number of interested people who are exploring its teachings and seeing what its many techniques of Self-discovery have to offer.

Herein you will find:

- Quotes by noteworthy people on the unique qualities of Hinduism
- Essential principles of the Vedic spiritual path
- Particular traits and customs of Hindu worship and explanations of them
- Descriptions of the main Yoga systems
- The significance and legends of the colorful Hindu festivals
- Benefits of Ayurveda, Vastu, Vedic astrology and gemology,
- Important insights of Dharmic life and how to begin.

The Dharmic path can provide you the means for attaining your own spiritual realizations and experiences. In this way it is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. This is the power of the Dharma since its universal teachings have something to offer anyone.

Published by iUniverse.com in paperback and E-book and by Brajbihari Lal & Sons in Vrindavana, India.

Seeing Spiritual India
A Guide to Temples, Holy Sites, Festivals and Traditions

This book is for anyone who wants to know of the many holy sites that you can visit while traveling within India, how to reach them, and what is the history and significance of these most spiritual of sacred sites, temples, and festivals. It also provides a deeper understanding of the mysteries and spiritual traditions of India.

This book includes:

- Descriptions of the temples and their architecture, and what you will see at each place.
- Explanations of holy places of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, and Muslims.
- The spiritual benefits a person acquires by visiting them.
- Convenient itineraries to take to see the most of each area of India, which is divided into East, Central, South, North, West, the Far Northeast, and Nepal.
- Packing list suggestions and how to prepare for your trip, and problems to avoid.
- How to get the best experience you can from your visit to India.
- How the spiritual side of India can positively change you forever.

This book goes beyond the usual descriptions of the typical tourist attractions and opens up the spiritual venue waiting to be revealed for a far deeper experience on every level.

Published by iUniverse.com in paperback and E-Book, and as "Spiritual India Handbook" from Jaico Publishing House in Mumbai at www.Jaicobooks.com.

Yoga and Meditation
Their Real Purpose and How to Get Started

Yoga is a nonsectarian spiritual science that has been practiced and developed over thousands of years. The benefits of yoga are numerous. On the mental level it strengthens concentration, determination, and builds a stronger character that can more easily sustain various tensions in our lives for peace of mind. The assortment of *asanas* or postures also provide stronger health and keeps various diseases in check. They improve physical strength, endurance and flexibility. These are some of the goals of yoga.

Its ultimate purpose is to raise our consciousness to directly perceive the spiritual dimension. Then we can have our own spiritual experiences. The point is that the more spiritual we become, the more we can perceive that which is spiritual. As we develop and grow in this way through yoga, the questions about spiritual life are no longer a mystery to solve, but become a reality to experience. It becomes a practical part of our lives. This book will show you how to do that. Some of the topics include:

- Benefits of yoga
- The real purpose of yoga
- The types of yoga, such as Hatha yoga, Karma yoga, Raja and Astanga yogas, Kundalini yoga, Bhakti yoga, Mudra yoga, Mantra yoga, and others.
- The Chakras and Koshas
- Asanas and postures, and the Surya Namaskar
- Pranayama and breathing techniques for inner changes
- Deep meditation and how to proceed
- The methods for using mantras
- Attaining spiritual enlightenment, and much more

236 pages, 33 illustrations, 6" x 9" trim size, ISBN: 1451553269, $17.95.
E-Book available for $7 at LULU.com

Avatars, Gods and Goddesses of Vedic Culture

Understanding the Characteristics, Positions and Powers of the Hindu Divinities

Understanding the assorted Divinities or gods and goddesses of the Vedic or Hindu pantheon is not so difficult as some people may think when it is presented simply and effectively. And that is what you will find in this book. This will open you to many of the possibilities and potentials of the Vedic tradition, and show how it has been able to cater to and fulfill the spiritual needs and development of so many people since time immemorial. Here you will find there is something for everyone.

This takes you into the heart of the deep, Vedic spiritual knowledge of how to perceive the Absolute Truth, the Supreme and the various powers and agents of the universal creation. This explains the characteristics and nature of the Vedic Divinities and their purposes, powers, and the ways they influence and affect the natural energies of the universe. It also shows how they can assist us and that blessings from them can help our own spiritual and material development and potentialities, depending on what we need.

Some of the Vedic Divinities that will be explained include Lord Krishna, Vishnu, Their main avatars and expansions, along with Brahma, Shiva, Ganesh, Murugan, Surya, Hanuman, as well as the goddesses of Sri Radha, Durga, Sarasvati, Lakshmi, and others. This also presents explanations of their names, attributes, dress, weapons, instruments, the meaning of the Shiva lingam, and some of the legends and stories that are connected with them. This will certainly give you a new insight into the expansive nature of the Vedic tradition.

$17.95 retail, 6" x 9" trim size, 230 pages, 11 black & white photos, available through www.Amazon.com and assorted outlets.

E-Book is available at Lulu.com for $7.00.

www.Stephen-Knapp.com

Be sure to visit Stephen's web site. It provides lots of information on many spiritual aspects of Vedic and spiritual philosophy, and Indian culture for both beginners and the scholarly.

You will find:

- All the descriptions and contents of Stephen's books, how to order them, and keep up with any new books or articles that he has written.
- Reviews and unsolicited letters from readers who have expressed their appreciation for his books, as well as his website.
- Free online booklets are also available for your use or distribution on meditation, why be a Hindu, how to start yoga, meditation, etc.
- Helpful prayers, mantras, gayatris, and devotional songs.
- Over a hundred enlightening articles that can help answer many questions about life, the process of spiritual development, the basics of the Vedic path, or how to broaden our spiritual awareness. Many of these are emailed among friends or posted on other web sites.
- Over 150 color photos taken by Stephen during his travels through India. There are also descriptions and 40 photos of the huge and amazing Kumbha Mela festival.
- Directories of many Krishna and Hindu temples around the world to help you locate one near you, where you can continue your experience along the Eastern path.
- Postings of the recent archeological discoveries that confirm the Vedic version of history.
- Photographic exhibit of the Vedic influence in the Taj Mahal, questioning whether it was built by Shah Jahan or a pre-existing Vedic building.
- A large list of links to additional websites to help you continue your exploration of Eastern philosophy, or provide more information and news about India, Hinduism, ancient Vedic culture, Vaishnavism, Hare Krishna sites, travel, visas, catalogs for books and paraphernalia, holy places, etc.
- A large resource for vegetarian recipes, information on its benefits, how to get started, ethnic stores, or non-meat ingredients and supplies.
- A large "Krishna Darshan Art Gallery" of photos and prints of Krishna and Vedic divinities. You can also find a large collection of previously unpublished photos of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

This site is made as a practical resource for your use and is continually being updated and expanded with more articles, resources, and information. Be sure to check it out.